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## FLOOD TIDE



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## FLOOD TIDE

# DANIEL CHASE

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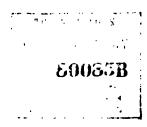
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BOOK THE FIRST

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### FLOOD TIDE

#### CHAPTER THE FIRST

I

ONE character in literature has always commanded my sympathy. I feel that he has been gravely misjudged, criticized without cause, mocked without reason. I refer to Alnaschar, Fifth Brother of the Barber of Bagdad.

I first heard of Alnaschar from old Henry Rideout. I was four years old at the time, convalescent from typhoid. Henry came every day to amuse me while my father was away at the store. He spun me yarns of sea adventure, tales of China voyages, drawling sagas of runs ashore in distant ports. Finally he exhausted his store of personal experience and fell back on his reading, giving me queer and distorted versions of many things, from Shakespeare to yellow backed novels. And at last he came to the Arabian Nights and the Barber's tale of his brother.

"He was a middling queer cuss," said Henry, wrinkling his brow in an effort of memory. "And as near as I can mind it, this is the yarn. Seems that one day when trade was dull the barber got to bragging about his family in general and his brothers in particular—he had a sight of them, some bad and the rest worse. What happened to the rest of them I disremember, but this fifth brother of his was the prize one of the lot. After the barber's old man died——"

"How did he die?" I asked, unwilling to miss any of the gory details.

"Kicked by a camel, I reckon," said Henry with ready

invention. "But be that as it may, he passed on and the barber and his brothers divvied the plunder betwixt them. And with his share this Alnaschar laid in a stock of cheap glassware and crockery and such. Then he piled his junk in a basket that he'd stole somewhere and sat down in the square to wait for trade, instead of going out and drumming it up. Shows the kind of worthless feller he was. And whilst he was waiting for some poor innocent to come along and be fleeced, he starts to figure out how he's going to come out on his venture.

"This here glass,' says he, 'stood me a hundred drachmas. At a reasonable profit I'll get two hundred drachmas for it and buy some more truck. Then,' he says, 'I'll pass that off and have four hundred drachmas. A smart chap like me won't be any time at all in turning that over into four thousand. And before long, stands to reason that I'll have twelve thousand. Then maybe I'll branch out into the brass jewelry and glass diamond trade. I'll have a trotter and a side-bar buggy and a house on High Street with a slate roof and a stone dog in the front yard, all very handsome. And pretty soon I'll have a hundred thousand drachmas. Easily,' he says. 'And that'll be enough,' says he. 'I'll lend it out on mortgages at a stiffish rate and retire.'

"And then he shakes out all sail and really starts to imagine things. 'I'll shine up to the mayor's daughter,' he plans. 'Maybe I'll even stand for deacon at the Orthodox Church and subscribe to foreign missions—not very heavy, but just enough to get the name of being pious and liberal. And if the mayor's daughter's got any sense at all, she'll be tickled to death to have me. But after we're spliced I'll show her who's skipper of the packet. I won't look at her. No, sir. I'll kick and carry on and howl and raise Old Ned no matter what she does. Nothing is going to please me the least mite. She'll cook me a bang-up dinner, chicken and everything, but I'll stay out on the front porch and won't come in. She'll send the butler out,

but I'll ship him back a'kiting. Then she'll dish up a tray real enticing and tote it out herself. I won't look at it. She'll beg me to eat. I'm danged if I will. She'll get down on her knees. And with that I'll give her a black look and raise my boot and kick that tray——'"

Here Henry paused for effect and filled his pipe with

maddening deliberation.

"And what then?" I piped eagerly.

"Why, just what a body might expect," said Henry. "He kicked out and busted his basket full of truck all to smash. And everybody in town laughed at him and agreed that it served him right."

I was disappointed.

"And he didn't sell his glass?" I asked.

"He did not. Fact is, he got fined for littering up the road."

"Nor marry the mayor's daughter?"

"There wasn't any mayor's daughter," said Henry, refusing me the slightest ray of hope. "He just imagined that."

"Oh!" Somehow or other I saw nothing amusing in Alnaschar's downfall. "But what did he do then?"

"I don't remember, exactly," admitted Henry. "Most likely he went down to the coast and shipped out on a whaler. Most good-for-nothing chaps seems to end up that way."

In common with the rest of the elder generation of Whitehaven sailors, Henry considered all whalers scum of the earth.

After he had clumped away I meditated upon the case of Alnaschar. His treatment of the mythical mayor's daughter I admitted was scarcely the correct thing, but the rest of it, all his plans for wealth and position, that appealed to me immensely. I saw nothing wrong in that. I was sorry for Alnaschar, not because he had suffered financial ruin, but because he had imagined something and been disappointed.

And, despite the passage of years, I am still sorry for him.

Perhaps a fellow feeling influences me, for my story is that of an elder Alnaschar. I have been a dreamer, a successful dreamer in many ways, working in even humbler stuff than the "brass jewelry and glass diamond trade." I have built great things for the pleasure of building, sacrificed even greater things for my visions, tired of it all, and at last awakened to find the pavement of the market place glittering with the strewn fragments of my fortune. Yet I am not a failure. I have both succeeded and failed in a manner which puzzled me immensely. . . .

And for all this, for my failure and success, there is but

one reason.

I am a dreamer.

п

Yet I dislike the term "dreamer." To my mind the dreamer is pale, with long fair hair, given to midnight maunderings and helpless abstraction from the affairs of the world. Through this book I have said much of dreams, but I have used the word for lack of a better. I have been no dreamer, but a futurist; futurists, and not dreamers, build bridges of moonbeams to distant goals. The dreamer dreams and accomplishes nothing; the futurist, staring after to-morrow and trampling to-day under foot, builds where the dreamer is content to imagine.

Dreams are wholly disappointing, while even in abortive futurism there is a certain satisfaction. I have found it so; I have even found satisfaction in looking back, through this book, on the time when yesterday was to-morrow. I have seen myself a child again, with dragons lurking among the tall, rank weeds of the neglected garden and ships vanishing beyond the Point on purple seas of romance; a boy, living in the borderland between childish dreams and the practical life about me; a youth in college, oppressed, like all youth, with a new-born sense of the

wasted effort and unrelated endeavor of life and planning to do away with it forever; a man—and yet a child in many ways—dreaming over business and persuading myself that business and not dreams was the attraction. I have seen myself during the last five years pursuing an illusory vision of happiness and at last coming home from the dark sea. Even now, in the autumn of life, I find that the falling leaves reveal far blue vistas, glimpses of unguessed country, unknown fields . . . I am still a futurist. . . .

And now I start over again, only a little wiser than before. We futurists die many times and are reborn as often. My life work, the work of my old life, is ended. As a child I dreamed of a world without competition. I then intended to eliminate entirely the waste and injustice of competitive business; I have succeeded in bringing the ultimate elimination of competition one-tenth of a second nearer in the march of eternity. With that I am content. How many of us accomplish even that much of our childish visions? . . .

We are all children, playing on the broad beach whose distances are veiled in mystery; playing, building, living our cloud-passages of joy and sorrow between the great sea whence we came and the dark forest into which we depart at the day's end. We work in sand, in the unstable sand worn from the foundations of the world by the slow marching years. We scratch the ground plans of immense structures; palaces with driftwood turrets, seaweed gardens and stately walks edged with shining pebbles; smooth-patted mounds, honevcombed with tunnels and crowned with tufts of beach grass and dune flowers; vast bridges spanning the slow streams meandering down from brackish pools. And, before night softens the mystery of the dark forest, perhaps we have built an outer court, a wall studded with shells and starfish, an abutment and half an arch of bridge; the rest is still a plan, still a dream. No matter; there is always to-morrow—to-morrow we will 8

build better and more wisely. And if the tide rises in the night, if the flood tide laps and crumbles our work even as we dust our hands and turn away in satisfaction—there is still to-morrow. To-morrow and a smooth beach. . . .

#### CHAPTER THE SECOND

1

THE first thing I can remember is being suspended by the heels over a half-hogshead, set under the eaves to catch the drip from the roof. My father had stirred the water until it was one great circling whirlpool, ropy, and black, and terrible, and had then held me over it—just to hear me howl, I imagine. He was a great deal of an overgrown boy in those days, although in later times he was grave enough. I think that my mother made a great to-do over it; I have a faint recollection of her rescuing me from a watery grave and scolding my father in mockvirago fashion.

"You might take some one your own size, you great brute," she said, and only the soft lifted curve of her cheek close to mine told me that she meant nothing serious. I'm not sure, but I think there was a sweet Irish tang to her low voice, the barest possible suggestion of

a brogue.

My father must have threatened to treat her in the same manner, for she fled to the protecting door of the house, turned to make faces at him, and bore me indoors to be sustained and comforted with gingerbread men.

I have but one other remembrance of my mother. I had heard some one tell how the Lord "walked in the garden, in the cool of the day," and had stolen down one spring morning to look for His footprints under the lilacs and syringas in the garden behind the house. The grass was still drenched with dew, my fect were soon chilled and the hem of my night-shirt in a sadly bedraggled state. I found no footprints save those of the nocturnal small

and must have set up a most lusty wailing, for my mother came out with a tartan shawl over her shoulders and two long, shining braids of hair down her back. She tucked me in bed again, promising to help me in my search, later in the day. She must have died soon after that; I myself was near death with typhoid for a long time—a matter of drains, I think, and not the result of this early morning expedition. I know that when I came downstairs again, a weak, scraggly shadow of a boy, she was gone. I missed her, but only vaguely; her loss was obscured by the fact that upon coming downstairs again I graduated from kilts to trousers and became a man.

These two fragmentary memories stand without background, absolutely unconnected with anything else in my experience. They seem now part of another existence. connected with my present life only by shadowy links. retain a faint impression of my convalescence, and being propped up with cushions on a broad window ledge looking out over the straggling garden and the street and the house roofs lower down on the hill. I seem to recall the view from this window as it appeared to me then; a low swung arch of the horse chestnut tree before the house framed a flawed blue sea and brown rocks and occasional white sails passing and repassing in slow contradance. I remember exploring the house as I grew stronger, investigating the mysteries of lilac clumps and gnarled apple trees and the shingled henhouse with the yard before it grown up to a jungle of prickly weeds. And clearest of all, and peculiar to this early period, I recall the constant procession of serving girls who came, abode their hour, and passed on out of my knowledge.

They came and went—not servant girls in the modern sense, but girls who came in to cook and to clean up the house, spinsters who poked into bureau drawers while my father was away at the store and who called me "poor little fellow," thereby winning my contempt. This was before the days of the modern cook-girl with her Scan-

dinavian accent, songs of the Fatherland and rudimentary ideas on the construction of apple pie. Among the train there was one old lady who sticks out in my memory for her uncanny knack of turning everything into Irish stew, a dish which my father heartily detested. Despite this failing she remained longer than any of the others, long enough, at any rate, to impress herself upon my memory. Perhaps the fact that she had the rare gift of silence had something to do with my father's toleration of her weird culinary performances.

But she left us, finally; they all left on one excuse or another. Their departure was usually the signal for rejoicing on both sides.

"Now, by Joe, we'll have some regular grub," my father

would say.

And we would—for a while. My father was a good cook—he made a chowder which lingers yet as a bright spot in my gustatory memories—but he invariably tired of it after a week or so. I usually anticipated him by becoming tired of washing dishes and sweeping floors—both very sketchy performances on my part. Our meals usually degenerated into bread and milk, supplemented by canned goods from the store. Sooner or later the time would come when my father, after rattling about for a time in the kitchen, appeared in the doorway in disgust.

"Which is it, son, beans or roast chicken with all the

fixings?" he would ask.

I cast my vote for chicken.

"Good. But we'll have to go down to the Province House to get that," he would say. "I don't believe that beans with blue mold on them are healthy, anyway."

The next day we would have a new girl. The first day of the new regime was always marked by a vigorous house cleaning—my assertions that I had cleaned house the day before being wantonly disregarded. Surprising the places they would dig dust and dirt from—places

where I would never have thought of looking. Usually, too, they pried apart my carefully stacked dishes and gave them all a thorough washing, perhaps desiring to avoid unpleasant discoveries later.

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I recovered from typhoid, and, at the age of four, became a partner in my father's business. He kept a store, a combination grocery-clothing-hardware store down on Front Street, just back from the wharves. It was altogether a very wonderful store; not the least wonderful feature of it was the weather beaten sign over the door—JOHN COFFIN, in great fat capitals. This was my father's name and mine also.

We would go down the hill together, my father and I, my feet drumming along between the heavier bass beats of his stride, the clean morning air from the sea coming in cool gusts against our faces, here and there a gray plume of smoke rising from the chimneys and the occasional scream of gulls from the harbor breaking the silence. On very calm mornings we could hear the rattle of blocks and creak of rigging and sometimes catch stray snatches of conversation from the distant boats, or hear the thump of rowlocks as some hake fisher brought his catch to the wharf. It was all strange and wonderful and clean, this being abroad while the rest of the world was still abed. Long after this I came across the phrase "Das Morgenuhr hat Geld ins Mund" in some textbook or other and the words brought it all back to me; the calm broken only by our clattering footsteps and the glint of the strong morning sun on my father's heavy black beard as I gazed up at him. Sometimes he met my glance and smiled down on me, but usually his gaze was fixed on the sails of the fishing fleet, far beyond the light house on the morning sea.

As we approached the store my father fished the great

key from his pocket and dangled it from his finger as he went along. We clumped over the loose-boarded walk in front and he opened and swung back the old door. A swirl of spicy odors marbled with stray whiffs of coffee and cinnamon greeted us, the cat came stretching and mewing forth from the back of the store—usually followed by a sprawling and staggering legion of offspring—and the day's work was begun.

I spent the greater part of these days in playing about the store-room in the rear, conducting exploring expeditions among the litter of bales and boxes and making a general nuisance of myself. There was a thin stream of customers in the store most of the day, women with market-baskets—a vanished race now—and fishermen whose garments smelt most strongly of their calling and who wore rubber boots and flannel shirts however hot and dry the weather. These last were my chief delight; they were a weather beaten race of men, loud voiced and terrible chewers of tobacco. They would demand of my father "where that young sculpin was at," and, running me to earth despite my shrieks of simulated terror, would ride me about the store on their shoulder, my head close to the blackened hand-hewn beams among the fly blown lamps and swinging oilskins. Once—red letter day!—one of them presented me with a miniature brig, carved from bone and the whole cunningly encased in a bottle smelling faintly and mysteriously like the donor's breath.

Perhaps I am beginning my search for causes at too early a date, but surely these first years of my life must have had a great effect on what came after. I must have had a strong propensity for imagination to begin with and this early part of my life strengthened it. My principal occupation then, as it has been since, was imagining things. Curiosity was my chief characteristic; a curiosity always gratified by my father. Whatever theory of education he had consisted of answering my questions as well as he could, never answering me quite

as completely as I desired, but always leaving a little tag of uncompleteness as an inspiration to further questionings. As my questions broadened in scope he developed a certain quality of metaphor and simile which served admirably to link things together and bring new matters within my horizon.

I had no trouble in finding material for inquiry about the store. China, for instance; somehow I had built up an image of China as a land of blue and yellow, with many-skirted pagodas and blue arched bridges and fishermen on the banks of impossibly zigzag streams, probably deriving my inspiration from an incomplete set of cracked crockery at home. Then I found a connection between the tea chests at the store and the set of crockery at home and took the matter to my father for solution.

"I'm not up on China," he confessed, and drummed reflectively on the counter. "My voyages were mostly to European ports, you know. Suppose we let it wait over awhile; guess the Eternal Kingdom won't change while we wait."

That night, by some strange chance, old Henry Rideout came clumping up to the house with his twisted foot, a tight rolled chart beneath his arm. He and my father cleared the table of its litter of books and tobacco ash and went over the chart together, I kneeling on a chair between them and following Henry's stubby finger with breathless interest.

And for weeks after that I kept a sharp lookout over the harbor for opium pirates and junks with paper sails and great staring eyes on either side of the bow.

There was another result of this manner of living. I became selfish, not intentionally but inevitably. Both at home and at the store I had everything I asked for; such a thing as an unattainable desire failed to enter into my calculations. In the scheme of things I came first, with the rest of the world a bad second.

In truth, there was no rest of the world. Most of my

days were lonely; I knew no children of my own age and was quite content to build my air castles and conduct voyages of discovery among the inexhaustible mysteries of the store. Once I fell asleep in a dim cave far in the rear of the shed, and was awakened by my father calling to me through the darkness. He carried me home that night, my head nodding drowsily over his shoulder.

"Golly," I said sleepily, "working in a store is hard

work, isn't it, Dad?"

And he agreed quite gravely that it was.

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It was soon after this, I think, that I discovered that there were other stores beside my father's.

I must have made this discovery on my first excursion into the town; I cannot remember straying from the streets between our house and the store before this. I had become tired of playing about the store and must have wandered through the front door and down the street while my father was busy elsewhere.

I went along, peering into back yards and front yards through palings and getting myself thoroughly lost after a while. Then, with startling abruptness, I came out into the Square and discovered other stores. My world rocked on its foundations.

Even the towering grandeur of the Town Hall, directly across from me, failed to hold my attention in the face of this discovery. I gaped at these other stores; they resembled my father's in a distant fashion; there were counters inside with boxes canted against them; people came out bearing bundles. . . . A horrible suspicion entered my mind. Was this China? I knew that I had come a long way. Perhaps.

As I looked about for pigtails and pagodas a familiar figure crossed the street—the man who had presented me

with the carved brig. He stared at me and then approached.

"Ain't you lost, so far from home?" he inquired

genially.

That settled it; China was far from home and this was China. And this man would probably shanghai me and make me work my passage home before the mast. I decided to return overland, and, without answering his hail, I turned and ran back the way I had come as fast as my legs would carry me.

He shouted after me, but I only ran the faster. Up streets and down streets I ran. Finally, by some miracle, I found the familiar door of the store. I shot in, pant-

ing and sobbing.

My father took the news calmly enough, after he had succeeded in making out what I was trying to tell him. Finally he understood that I had found other stores—he disillusioned me on the China part of it. But that made it worse. Other stores in town! "Damnable" was not part of my vocabulary then, but that was the way I felt about it. He heard me through with the utmost patience.

"I know," he said, when I had finished. "I've known about Adams and Bridges, and Patch Brothers and all those other fellows for a long time. But I didn't want to bother you about it. You see, Whitehaven is a pretty big town now and there's more trade than one store could handle. And if this was the only store in town I could put prices as high as I liked, and folks would either have to buy of me or go without."

This argument impressed me as eminently fair, and I considered it as best I could.

"And if some one else ran the only store in town they might raise the prices of things, too," I suggested.

"That's just it," he agreed. "You've hit it first shot. We act as a check on one another, you see. You can't get along without competition. . . . By the way, Lucy

said something about making some sugar cookies this afternoon. You don't know a healthy young lad with an appetite, do you?"

So ended my first lesson in economics. Lucy, our cook pro tem, was the possessor of a famous recipe for cookies, handed down from her grandmother's time, and I hurried away up the hill to assure her that her cookies would never gather mold while I had my health and appetite.

That afternoon I stuffed the front of my blouse with cookies and climbed to my favorite perch in one of the apple trees—the cookies suffered in the ascent, I remember, and the fragments sifted down into my boots, making me feel like an early Christian doing penance—and sat down to reason out the matter as best I could with my limited knowledge of the world. But this knowledge was so limited that I made a sad botch of it; the only definite conclusion I made was that my father was a man of unparalleled generosity in allowing this state of affairs to continue. After all, these other stores appeared to me highly unnecessary.

But I didn't tell my father what I thought. He brought up the subject again that evening, as we sat together in the living room after supper. He went into the matter rather thoroughly, elaborated his views on the necessity of competition and proved his case to his own satisfaction and my own bewilderment. I clung to my original doubt with a new found stubbornness; it was the first time that I had thought for myself and the first time that I had disagreed with my father's opinions. I enjoyed the sensation.

Competition impressed my youthful mind as something eminently unfair and wasteful. I still have that impression, changed somewhat, and with the direct sense of personal injury gone from it, but still much the same. I had imagined a world with our store as the center; abruptly I discovered a world in which the store was merely a satellite of a very minor planet indeed. It hurt.

Before I went to bed that night I planned to do away with competition entirely and forever—to abolish it by decree when I attained wisdom and manhood.

We often talked together in the evening in this manner—or rather my father talked and I made valiant efforts to follow him. Sometimes he read to me and sometimes talked; and once or twice I remember his breaking off in the midst of a story and picking up his book again. I have always thought that he did this to avoid bringing in my mother's name, for he never trusted himself to speak of her. I learned her maiden name and her age from the stone in the old graveyard, but that is all I know of her.

IV

It is quite likely that I discovered Whitehaven by degrees, the unwelcome companion of boys older than myself. But, looking back, I seem to find myself cast into it all at once. I must have been eight years old at the time.

I carried a torch, as I remember this sudden discovery; an evil smelling, oil dripping, flaring and guttering contraption. The stick rests in the waistband of my trousers and produces an anticipatory Thanksgiving effect. I march at the elbow of a stout man with a shining big mouthed horn looped over his shoulder in a glorified blanket roll. He scowls, puffs and produces the melodious compah-compah part of a soul-stirring music which marches with me. He pauses and gasps for breath; with the pause his face returns to human form. He reaches out a hand and pulls me down to earth.

"You hold that torch where I can see my sheets," he commands gruffly. "What d'you think you are—the whole peerade?"

"Yessir," I answer eagerly.

He scowls doubtfully, then suddenly purses his lips and shatters the air again with his two notes up and down the scale. I hold the torch closer, to the immediate peril of his eyebrows. But he seems satisfied and I surely am.

The music crashes to a superb finale; the staccato beat of a drum emerges from the ambush of sound; the resplendent uniform beside me empties its horn and clamps on a fresh sheet of music as we march. From one side of his mouth he informs his neighbor, a tall man with an equally resplendent uniform, that these hills sure raise hell with a man's wind. The tall man agrees that he is hooting right. I treasure their utterances.

Beyond the tall man is another torch, borne sturdily aloft by Dick Stowell. Ahead, a third torch bobs along over the shoulder of Bunny Long; other torches tell that the rest of the gang are scattered among the band. I half envy the Bemish kids; they march with the front rank.

"Ain't it great, Coffin?" calls Stowell.

"Ain't it great?" I echo.

Bunny turns, a streak of oil from brow to chin. "Gee, I hope they march all night!"

A shape materializes beside me.

"Aw, let me lug it for a while, Coffy," it begs. "You can have it again when they begin to play. Honest. Come on, let me lug it!"

I shift the butt of the torch to an easier position and refuse. The shape tries its blandishments on Dick, with the same results. It drops back and trudges disconsolately in our rear.

Then, as I remember it, we reached the brow of the hill above the railroad station. Stowell, Bunny, the fat man with the horn all were forgotten. I stared open mouthed ahead. All High Street blazed with dancing torches, lines of them, four abreast, moving in rhythmic beat. The long lines twinkled, dwindled in the distance, swung around the corner by the Common, reappeared and were swallowed up in the yawning gulf of Front Street. A million torches—more than a million. Here and there trans-

parencies and banners punctuated the lines. Another band throbbed and brayed in the distance.

I gaped, faced about, and looked back. The band on which my torch shed illumination headed the second section. Down the winding slope to the station wavered more lights—another million torches. Line after line they stretched away; banners, marching men and flickering lights; the scuffling of innumerable feet over frozen ground; "hep—hep—I had a good job but I—hep—hep." Half way down the line a transparency blazed up in a sudden jet of flame; it rose and fell as the bearer tried to beat out the fire, to an accompaniment of jeers; it soared in an abrupt arc and blazed steadily in a vacant lot.

The advancing front line loomed above me as I gaped; every man of them ten feet high, wonderful in red coats, blue pants and white capes. Overhead a great banner stretched taut in the still evening air—CLEVELAND AND HENDRICKS in great shining letters. The drum, now beyond me, resounded in a sharp thunder roll—a pause—a sharp double tap—and the band burst forth into music beautiful beyond all—well, the band burst forth into music.

"As I was walking down the street
I found a dollar and a quarter,
Ten thousand Micks layed down their bricks
At the Battle of the Boyne Water."

So sang a derisive voice from the silent crowd on the sidewalk. There was a perceptible sway of the marching ranks toward the sound; a sharp command and they swayed back again into line.

"Not yet, laddy bucks, not yet. We're here to convert the benighted to the love of Grover—peaceably if we can. Wait a while. . . . You lad, scuttle ahead before you get hurted."

I scuttled ahead and took up my place again.

A drum beat within me; I stepped high. This was Whitehaven as it should be; marching throngs, lights, music, massed crowds on the sidewalks—and myself in the very center of it. We descended the undulating slope of the hill between lines of silent watchers; the torches set the many-paned windows of the old houses aglow and bathed their frowning fronts in new beauty. We reached the Common, swung around one side and entered the Square; the white pillared town house frowned down on us in disapproval. The great bell of the Orthodox Church boomed eight as we marched by; our music was momentarily obscured. The booming ceased, and the music soared on, triumphant over time.

Across the lower end of the Square hung a great banner, dependent from the roofs on either side. The ranks ahead reached ineffectually for it with their torches. Two men from the last rank fell back; a third sprang aloft on their locked arms; a torch shot swiftly up. The banner smouldered, then showed a tiny spark of blaze. A shout and shower of debris from the sidewalk and the pyramid dissolved. As we passed below, the blaze grew to a consuming flare; the painted letters of the BLAINE AND LOGAN stood forth in fire; then the rope parted and two sweeping arcs of blazing canvas scattered the sidewalk crowds. A yell of delight surged back along the advancing lines.

A yell of a different sort went up as we passed Tuttle and Wetherbee's Grain and Feed Store. The door in the gable opened and closed with a bang, leaving a limp, dangling figure swinging from the projecting beam overhead. For a moment the reality of it sickened me, brought my heart into my throat. Then, as the figure twisted around and faced the coming procession I recognized another piece of pleasantry. A placard on the straw stuffed paunch announced that this was Cleveland—a delicate satire, the humor of which failed to appeal to the marchers.

"Keep your eyes skun, Jimmy," advised the fat man, in a pause of the music.

The tall man with the slip horn eyed him morosely. "I just got the old horn straightened out from the last time," he said. "If any son of a sea-cook smashes her again—."

He drifted off into muttered threats. I listened, won-

dering.

We swung into Front Street and went on. We passed my father's store, tightly shuttered and dark, the raised walk before it a haven of refuge for the women folk. Further on we passed under the bowsprit of the *Polydore*, the last of the Whitehaven three-stickers, poked inquiringly across the street. Dark figures lined the jibboom overhead, arms resting comfortably on the spar, their illuminated feet on the taut footropes below. I envied them their bird's eye view of the procession.

We went on, bands playing, torches wavering and flickering, two million feet-no less-rising and falling in rhythmic tramp before me, two million more echoing behind. We wound up hill, and the lights before made a glittering Jacob's ladder to the Milky Way; we writhed down hill again and a glittering, shimmering lane of lights followed us as the children of Hamelin followed the Pied Piper. We passed through the Back District. where the Portuguese lived, and were greeted with uproarious applause from lines of swarthy faces. This, by the way, was the only section that did applaud our progress. We marched and countermarched through the broken-backed Whitehaven streets, doubling and twisting; the band played, the torches smoked and shone, the marchers shouted songs, crowds without end lined the way, the grim old Colonial fronts frowned down on our boisterous progress and made a bad job of it.

Bodily, I stumbled along, an insignificant part of the spectacle, bearing my torch which by this time had tripled its weight. Mentally—and perhaps this is a good

indication of the kind of boy I was—I climbed the porch of the old Macomber house and reviewed the procession. From that vantage point you got a view of the throng approaching down Queen Street; without turning your head you could see them wheel and file away among the network of streets toward the waterfront. I made a mental picture of it, every figure heroic size, every torch outshining the light on Great Head. My only regret was that I had but one body to contribute to the spectacle; I wanted two—one to march and the other to stand aside and watch the first march by.

We turned into Front Street again and the fat man with the horn was visibly relieved.

"All straight going now, Jimmy," he observed cheerfully.

"Yep," answered the slip-horn artist. He sniffed fastidiously. "Stinking hole, isn't it?"

We were by this time nearly under the bowsprit of the *Polydore* again. I sniffed, in imitation of the tall man. There was indeed an overpowering smell of fish in the air. The bowsprit loomed overhead, the black spider web of rigging meshing the stars.

Then many things happened. From the spar above came the silvery trill of a bos'n's pipe; the crimson flare of a Coston light lit up the low roofs of the shacks across the street. Twin spouts of water shot from the bowsprit, falling in glittering arcs, every drop a ruby. One played on the rear of the first section, one on the head of the advancing column. The low roofs sprouted figures; arms rose and fell, showering the uniformed ranks with a shrapnel of odoriferous cods' heads. In the momentary silence that followed the assault came the rapid clank of pumps from the deck of the *Polydore*. The clock on the Orthodox Church cleared its throat with a preliminary rasp and started to boom the hour.

Then, quite suddenly, the tall man and I stood alone in a cleared space. The band vanished in a compact rush

to the sidewalk. The bell mouth of the tall man's horn had been the billet of a particularly squashy cod's head; he swore shrilly and danced in rage, defying the universe to come on.

They came. A roar of voices rolled over the tall man and reduced his cursing to visible but inarticulate mouthing; a dark phalanx charged from a side street and fell upon the flank of the marchers; Front Street, from end to end, exploded in a sudden riot of combat. Dark figures dropped from roofs, caught their balance, and charged with joyous whoops. Torches rose and fell and vanished underfoot.

My island of isolation narrowed swiftly. The tall man joined the combat, his horn glittering in flailing blows. Still the lines retreated. They joined. By some miracle I found myself raised aloft on shoulders, squeezed up-

ward instead of being trampled underfoot.

I swaved and reeled as the crowd surged beneath me. Fists thudded; the shouting dwindled to grunts and sharp intakes of breath. Intent, drawn faces appeared and vanished in the swirl of combat. I watched, still clutching my torch, without the slightest feeling of dan-

Then, above the drone of battle, I heard my name.

"Jack!"

I looked, and saw my father staring down from the flat roof opposite. For a moment his eyes held mine. I

was suddenly afraid.

"Keep up!" he called, making a trumpet of his hands. He swung over the edge, dangled a moment, and dropped. He straightened, located me swiftly, and shot into the crowd. Not into it, but under it; his head when he disappeared was waist-high. The mass of men reeled under the impact. He disappeared, but a sub-surface commotion marked his passage. Figures surged apart suddenly and unaccountably; one man shot aloft and hung there for a moment, grinning foolishly at me across the heaving backs below. A fresh commotion and he up-ended suddenly and vanished with a waving of legs. My support rocked violently. I clutched desperately with my free hand, wavered, toppled backward—and was grasped from behind.

"Hold tight, son," said a familiar voice. My father's left arm went about me; we began to move slowly out of the press. We gained a step, swayed as some fresh onslaught set the crowd swaying. We stood a moment, his arm a bar of iron about my waist, the veins on his forehead standing out with the strain. A giant of an Irishman faced slowly toward us as the mob turned, a frayed fringe of his rubber cape clinging about his neck in a tattered ruff. He grinned cavernously and aimed a mighty fist at my father. My torch swung down, my father's right hand shot up, palm outward; both hand and torch struck at the same moment. A look of content overspread the Irishman's face, his eyes closed, and, as though pulled by an invisible string, he slumped down out of sight.

We became the center of a little whirlpool of activity. Fists shot out, fell short or were beaten down by my father's free hand. I swung my torch, now a battered and tinkling wreck, belaboring every head within reach. A swing of the crowd carried us under the projecting bowsprit; the dolphin striker loomed overhead, just beyond

my reach.

"Up, Jackie," gasped my father. I shot up as he heaved, grasped the backropes and swung up in safety. A moment, and my father followed me in a mighty leap, those below clutching in vain at his dangling heels.

He breathed heavily for a moment, then laughed.

"They're too close to do much damage," he said. Then he turned to me quickly. "Not hurt, are you?"

Now that I was safe, I was crying—and ashamed of it. "N-no," I sobbed. "But I b-busted my torch and I wanted to keep it."

Then, as abruptly as it began, the fight was over. The mob below broke into fleeing and pursuing units. A great shout from the Square told that the first column had been routed. The Coston light subsided to a red point, and, with a final resonant hum, the church clock finished striking the hour.

V

Whenever, in these later years, I think of the Whitehaven of my boyhood it stands forth in the lurid colors of that night, illuminated in the high light of adventure. The prosaic old town of my later remembrances, with its dull houses, dusty streets somnolent under plumed elms, deserted wharves fringed with sea-green beards swaying in the slow tides—all that is quite another place.

In this old Whitehaven romance was always just around the next crooked corner of the winding street. The marshes behind the town were the shores of the High Barbaree, their winding channels all unknown rivers to be explored on rafts consisting of three railroad ties nailed together with driftwood. The wind-swept, sun-drenched sickle of golden beach was the Sahara—disregarding the incongruity of the ocean—its dunes were mighty hills and its scattered pines marked oases.

But this Whitehaven has vanished. Perhaps it existed only in my imagination; perhaps it still exists in the mind

of some youngster running about town to-day.

Still there has been a real and evident change in the town. There was brave talk of electric cars as I grew older; they finally materialized during the years when I was away at college—bob-tailed little cars which pitched and clattered their way along the quiet streets. With them came the change; they brought Sunday trippers from the mill towns inland—the same towns that had sent the Democratic torch light parade. A sporadic growth of bathing houses sprang up along the curve of the beach, Front Street took up the fish dinner trade, the

picture post card made its appearance and the old Whitehaven was gone forever. Sunday became a day of noise and crowded streets, and after a few weak efforts to get back into the old quiet fashion the town finally gave in and tailed along with the procession.

The change brought prosperity of a sort, but it has taken more than it gave. The old charm is gone and gone forever. Factories have sprung up. There is a power plant on the border of the marsh. The Point, across the harbor, has been covered with bungalows and more pretentious summer dwellings. There is a new macadam road across the marsh, a broad gray strip by day and a flick-

ering firefiy lane by night.

But to return to that lurid night of the Cleveland-Blaine campaign. I remember that Stowell and I talked about it later—years later. We were wiser and older then, immeasurably older. We had attained high school and long pants. Cleveland had been elected, had served his term, been defeated for reëlection by Harrison and was running again. We discussed the campaign and added to our consciousness of wisdom by contrasting it with memories of past campaigns. And, of course, we recalled and exchanged remembrances of the torch light parade and the resultant row.

"What a crazy night that was!" Dick said. "My brother Frank came home with two black eyes and half a

shirt. And I got whopped for staying out late."

I ventured a vague question. "What did you think of it at the time?"

He considered. "I thought it was good fun," he said unimaginatively.

"No more?"

"No. What other view of it could I take?"

"I don't know," I answered and paused helplessly. "You couldn't look at it in any other way, I suppose. . . . You know that engraving down in the Town Hall—Napoleon at the bridge of Lodi?"

"Yes," he admitted suspiciously. "Napoleon with a flag and the rest of the crowd tearing after him; off in the clouds scenes from Napoleon's future—St. Helena tucked away in one corner. What about it?"

"I felt like that-only more so."

He stared at me blankly, evidently not understanding in the least. I myself only half understood what I tried to express.

But I know that in my visions there was no St. Helena.

## VI

I spare you a reconstruction of my early school days. I was not interested in school. Few boys are. Thanks to my father's instruction I was spared the necessity of learning to read and write and perform the simpler arithmetical calculations. Beyond the fact that I covered the first two grades in one year my recollections of school are distinctly fragmentary in character.

I have the impression that primary education, at that time, was passing through a period of transition from the old "three R" form to the more modern form of education—the system that considers the child as an individual problem rather than as one of a row of vessels to be filled to a certain level with information. I remember grayheaded and bearded members of the school committee coming to visit the school, clad in ceremonial creaking boots and unaccustomed boiled shirts. They listened solemnly to our singing and inspected our crude water colors of apples, flowers and geometrical forms and then went away shaking their heads. Through the door one saw them consult doubtfully in the corridors, no doubt lamenting the Zeitgeist that had forced these departures from the good old methods. One of them, after sniffing and snorting at our highfalutin' ideas, attempted to put us through a drill in mental arithmetic, getting himself most sadly

tangled in the process, to his discomfiture and the rejoicing of his more progressive colleagues.

What impresses me now is the fact that even with these improvements there was absolutely no connection between school and life. Perhaps that is why I remember so little of it. We fretted through simple and compound fractions without the slightest notion of their practical application. We had legions of unassociated things beaten into our reluctant young heads—things that we should have learned easily and as a matter of course. We were not taught; we had lists of facts set before us, to be committed to memory because it was so ordained.

Geography alone interested me-merely because charts

and maps were familiar grounds to me.

But even here school failed most lamentably. Most of us gathered a large contempt of book knowledge from reading that "Oceanica includes all the islands of the Pacific Ocean south of the Tropic of Cancer; it exports tobacco, sugar, copra and rice," and then sitting at the feet of Captain Bill Hawkins while he told us of atolls and palm trees and natives with flashing white teeth. Why were their teeth white? Because they were cannibals and needed them in their business.

"Ah, boys, you haven't eaten until you've et human flesh!" he would say, and then neglect to state whether he had ever eaten or not. I imagine that he got as much fun out of his stories as the listeners. He told us highly colored tales of pirates in lateen rigged proas, showed us Malay knives with crinkly blades, and enlightened us about copra. It was not mined, as we had supposed.

Or old Schrader, from the heights of his ninety years, would tell us of slaving voyages, of African swamps, and rivers running rippleless between green arching walls. He told us of the time they were overhauled by an English frigate off the Brazilian coast and got rid of their incriminating cargo.

"How do you t'ink?" he queried.

"Shoot 'em?" ventured Dick Stowell.

"Yah! With bowder so dear, too? No! Siehst du. There iss a port—about half so big as that window. Well. And above is the anchor-on deck-mit chain-fathoms of it. So. Now the chain overside and through the port-and mit spare irons-."

He had a rare gift of narrative; you could see every blood spot and hear the clank of the chain as it ground overboard with its shrieking freight. And then the hurried swabbing up, the tossing overboard of what fragments the chain left behind, the pink ripples about the circling black fins-it was strong meat.

Perhaps, after all, it was only natural that school failed to hold our interest in the face of such competition.

I must have been all of twelve years old when my father bought me the little dory around which so many of my youthful recollections cluster. She was a dory with a little triangular spritsail—he had insisted on that despite my ambitions to pile on all the canvas she would stagger under, my purpose being to sail rings around Captain Hawkins and his much vaunted Lily Lou. My father promptly set his foot on that. I think the first bitter moment of my life came when Captain Hawkins slid past us on our maiden trip, his eyes fixed dreamily ahead and his left hand toying with a coiled rope in the stern of the Lily. I knew that this dumb show was his way of offering us a tow, and I hated him for it.

Still, by hoisting our shirts in light winds we managed to get fairly good speed out of the Shadow, as I christened her. Along the water front this was corrupted to Shad, because she was all ribs and not very roomy inside. We decked her over forward and painted her gray and lied valiantly about the knots she logged. When we had a crew I was the Old Man and Dick Stowell filled the office of first mate—the first mate, you know, does all the knocking down. But usually we sailed alone, the two of us, equal in command.

The Shadow is inseparably connected in my mind with Buck's Island. This was one of our first discoveries, a rocky little fragment of land between the town and Great Head, thickly wooded and separated from the mainland by a narrow channel. We built a hut there, against a ledge; a rough hovel half filled by the chimney and fireplace which we erected with infinite labor and which refused to draw after all. This was our haven of refuge on rainy days when the east wind came blustering in, scattering silver rain with the prodigal hand of a sailor just off a three years' cruise. Sometimes, I suspect, we sailed down in the rain just for the pleasure of getting dry again before our own hearthstone. On such days we built up the fire until the wind roared loud over the chimney, then sprawled before the fire and built air castles for each other's admiration.

This was my one point of superiority over Dick. I could imagine ten things while he was trying to fix one vaguely in his mind. His mental processes ran to plain black and white; there were no shades between, no half truths. Either a thing was so or it wasn't. To me there seemed an infinite range of color, embracing all tints and shades from the deepest purple of romance to the faintest shadowing of gray reality.

Naturally we disagreed on many things. In fact, we agreed on only one—and we never talked of that. This was the sea itself. Boylike, we could talk of concrete matters, but a certain shyness kept us from discussing the more abstract aspects of beauty. It was not shyness alone, for we felt the beauty of the sea but vaguely and lacked the vocabulary to express our thoughts. I am glad now that we made no attempt to reduce these shadowy conceptions to speech, for at best we could have evolved nothing but commonplace phrases. Often Dick

and I would lie for hours on the cliff above the hut, silently watching the cloud shadows drift over the sea, or following the distant boats as they crawled slowly from one lobster buoy to the next. We had no ideas of eternity or religion but the sea was to us the visible sign of both.

Many a summer's afternoon we have lain on the cliff until the evening fog banks crept in and threaded pearls on the spider webs. We saw the fogbanks first as a long white line on the distant blue, creeping imperceptibly shoreward. They blotted out first the base of the light house on the distant head, then veiled the white shaft and finally engulfed the black bulb of the beacon. Then, drifting slowly toward us along the slant of the shore, the bank brought headland after headland into silhouette against its blank wall of whiteness, dissolving woods and cliffs. And, before the long white line reached the Island, we could hear the bellow of the fog horn at the light, like some great sea-monster yammering in helpless pain and wrath. The cliffs gathered the echoes and flung them back until we seemed surrounded by a herd of strange antediluvian beasts, calling and clamoring to each other in the dim whiteness.

Then we would go down, to cover the Shadow with the tarpaulin, throw fresh logs on the smouldering fire and talk far into the night.

I remember old Caspar Schrader, one night, telling us of a summer night long ago, when his ship lay off Tahiti; the moonlight on the harbor brought back to him the heavy perfume of the land breeze, the long silver pathway of the moon, the lacelike lines of palms against the soft, dusky sky, and the hush and beauty of it all.

"Ah, boys, id was wonderschön," he said, with a catch in his quavering old voice, "wonderschön! The moon-path, and the low rumble of the surf on the sand and the soft tinkle of a woman's laugh across the silend water. Jim and I leaned on the rail and drank it all in, until the

moon slid down behind the hills and the last light on shore was oud."

He puffed meditatively for a moment.

"But that was long, long ago," he went on, "and Jim has been under the sea for forty—fifty years now. And old Caspar tells liddle boys stories by moonlight, when they should be safe in bed."

And Dick and I went home through the silent streets. We lived in the present, you see, and didn't talk about such things, while old Caspar lived in the past. But we felt them, just the same.

## CHAPTER THE THIRD

1

I LOOK back on the adolescent Coffin and despair of giving you any clear impression of him. I myself see him but dimly; his moods escape me. I must have been sloughing off my childhood at this time and trying on the garments of maturity; trying on first one set of clothes

and then another with bewildering rapidity.

The old veils with which I had swathed the world in mysterious wonder were swept aside. I no longer dreamed vaguely of South Sea islands; I no longer went about with strange names like Bab el Mandeb and Tierra del Fuego, names resonant of adventure, ringing through the back of my head. It had been a habit of mine to visualize these places through the hypnosis of repetition, building up mental images of them. And queer enough images they were; Tierra del Fuego is still associated in my mind with volcanoes, palm trees and camels, while Mozambique and Antofagasta still bring images of gaberdined Hebrews and drug stores. But now these childish speculations had been outgrown and supplanted by ambitions.

I drifted, or rather swung violently, from one ambition to another. For almost a year I was engrossed in a great vision of being a railroad man; time tables from one end of the country to the other filled my pockets and there was a great box of railroad literature under my bcd in the low roofed chamber. This dream perished from over-expansion, wandering off into steamship lines and bridge construction. Besides, the dingy dustiness of our little railroad station—where I would have to start my conquest—repelled me more than a little. That was not ro-

mance, but work. I think that you get the distinction. But even now the quadruple blast of a locomotive whistling for crossings brings faint memories of the days when that blast was the trumpet call of romance.

Again, I was inspired to become a great painter, feeling the first stirrings of the creative instinct. I spent weeks in following an art class from Boston about the rocks. of the Point and the beach below the fish houses, worshiping and questioning. I remember still the feverish disappointment that was mine when I first tried to draw and found that I couldn't. I started a great picture on one of our largest sheets of wrapping paper; the subject, if I remember correctly, was Dick and I standing off a rush of mutineers, splotches of blood on the deck and great green seas and tattered rigging in the background. Youth always runs to high colors and lurid effects. This first composition of mine never got beyond a smudged and scratchy pencil sketch, marvelously out of proportion. I remember crying over it as I worked, although I was almost fifteen at the time, crying from sheer rage because I could see it all so clearly and was utterly unable to set it down. This was my first attempt to give a vision the substance and form of reality and was a most lamentable and piteous failure. I had seen Dick thousands of times but when I tried to draw his nose I failed completely. drew my own profile, with the aid of two mirrors, and stared in amazement at the distorted result. I have found the same trouble many times since, this outrunning of the hand by the mind, but never since have I experienced the same keen and overwhelming disappointment at my failure to bring my mind pictures to reality.

But here the other side of my nature came in. I wanted to draw; I would draw whether I could or not. I hung on the outskirts of that art class until I was nicknamed "The Pest." Finally—in self defense, I think—I was given an hour's instruction, told that one started to be an artist by drawing simple things first, and begged not

to annoy them further. Whether I did or not I have forgotten; I know that by the end of that summer I could sketch after a fashion and had rudimentary ideas on the handling of color. Then, queerly enough, I was ashamed of my accomplishment. I regarded art as effeminate, and not until I had been two years at college did I bring the fruits of this ambition to light.

No doubt I had an infinity of other ambitions at one time or another. I have faint memories of desiring to be a bucko mate on a whaler; a stock broker; a clerk in the Whitehaven bank; king of a savage tribe on a remote and indefinite island; a lighthouse keeper and lastly a sheep tender in Australia. These ambitions were all alike in that not one of them had a connection with reality. And they were all ambitions, all connected with the future. My mind seems to have taken that bent.

Interwoven through all these futures ran two figures beside myself. There was Dick Stowell, of course. And another. For, quite incidentally, I had fallen in love.

11

Measured by standards of perfection I suppose that Bess was far from beautiful at that time, just a snub nosed little girl with tight-twisted braids down her back and bright china blue eyes. In fact, judging the matter as calmly as I may, I doubt whether she could have ever been called beautiful. I have my doubts of the potency of mere physical beauty as an attractive force. Her hair was yellow, then, although later it darkened through shades of gold and red to a chestnut full of deep golden shadows. But even then her brows and lashes were dark, in contrast to her eyes, and she had a trick of smiling in a one sided fashion which lingers still in my memory.

Her father was one of the great American army of drifters, always seeing great possibilities in the future and always blind to the advantages at hand. He was essentially a nomad, eternally lured by the will o' the wisp of fortune to new fields whose sole beauty was the glamor cast by distance. Why he came to Whitehaven I cannot imagine; perhaps because it was a new place and, to his mind, full of possibilities. He was much disliked, I imagine, because of the disparaging way he had of contrasting Whitehaven to other towns in which he had lived. Even in Whitehaven he could not be contented, but was continually moving from one house to another.

He finally settled in a house diagonally across the street from ours, a most undesirable house with a pinched back yard and a shabby front. Alden planned additions which he would make when his ship came in, and in time persuaded himself that it was quite a comfortable dwelling. Out of the way, you know, and the drainage problem was rather a bother, but still not so bad—for a temporary place.

He was forever planning vast things and invariably leaving them in a half completed state. I remember that one night he stopped my father and me as we came home from the store and asked my father's opinion on a crazy contraption which he had built in the garden beside the house.

"What do you think of it?" he asked, rather doubtfully but still hopefully.

My father surveyed it critically. "What is it?" he asked.

"A garden seat."

"I see." My father forebore criticism. "Going to paint it?"

"Do you think that would help? It does look rather unfinished—not as I planned it, exactly. But then, a garden seat ought to be sort of rough and unfinished." Alden leaned over and drove another nail in the midst of an already large cluster. The seat swayed and creaked as he drove it home; he steadied it with his knee and swore heartily as he hammered.

"It's that damn wood," he explained, "it won't cut straight—won't hold nails—no good anyway."

We went on, my father chuckling to himself. I think

that he enjoyed Alden immensely.

Alden went to Alaska during the rush of '98, and the last letter they had from him was written as he was setting out to cross Chilkoot. It was always supposed that he died there, although for a long time after that Elizabeth's mother talked of "when Alf comes home." Later this became "if Alf comes home," and later still "if he had come home." She had imbibed some measure of his witless optimism, although I have always thought that she must have recognized Alden's inherent worthlessness and set her foot down on wandering further than Whitehaven.

ш

At one time Stowell was sick with measles or some other of the ailments which his family shared unselfishly, and I fell from man's estate and played house with Bess in the ramshackle henhouse which Dick and I had fitted up as our retreat from the world. She criticized our domestic arrangements unsparingly and to turn her attack I told her of our latest scheme. Stowell and I were going cattle farming in the Argentine, as we had planned it—one of the few plans we ever agreed upon. Perhaps we agreed in this case because it satisfied both my romanticism and Dick's practically. Bess listened, enthralled, egging me on with questions and admiration until I had told her our whole plan, to which Dick and I had sworn eternal secrecy.

"My father makes plans like that," she said, when I stopped for lack of further imagination, "but something always happens. But he's always going to invent something, or sell something; he never planned anything as nice as that."

I swelled my chest at the compliment and intimated

that I could imagine better things than that with one hand tied behind me.

"And then you'll make a lot of money, and come back and we'll go to New York to live," she went on, taking my dream fabric and using it for her own ends before I could explain that she didn't come in on this plan. "You will make a lot of money, won't you, for me?"

I resisted. This was carrying the thing too far; I had imagined nothing beyond lassoing long-horns and riding over the pampas on a "fleet mustang." But she smiled at me, with one eyebrow lifted in that bewitching fashion, and I grudgingly admitted her to the plan, wondering what Dick would have to say about it. But I still resisted on a minor point; her insistence on "lots of money" rather grated on me.

"But my father says that you can't get along without it," she remonstrated, wide-eyed. "Of course you want to make money; that's what everybody wants."

I put my finger on an inconsistency; she admitted that I was smarter than her father and yet she quoted him as a final authority on worldly success. But what is consistency to a woman?

"Oh, I only meant in making plans; my father knows a lot more than you do," she said scornfully. "Besides, unless you come home with money I won't marry you."

I avowed my intention of never marrying—and then she smiled at me again.

My reward for forswearing my ideals of life were a soft-breathed sigh of satisfaction and a kiss which somehow or other missed its mark and slid off the end of her nose into space. After she had gone I sat with my head in my hands and considered what Dick would say to this radical change in our plans. I needn't have worried, for the next day Bess refused to treat me as an accepted lover, and when Dick came back to school I had resolved to become a begging friar and had shut women out of my life forever.

IV

I soon recovered from my desire to take monastic vows, however, for Bess relented, after putting me in my place, and I became her accepted though clandestine lover. We both had a wholesome fear of the guying of our schoolmates and our few love passages were confined to times away from school. Our Saturday trips to the Island lost much of their savor; of course Bess couldn't go and I couldn't very well talk to Dick about her.

She interfered most persistently in both the practical and the idealistic sides of my existence. My plans for the future gradually took on new aspects; it became necessary to include her in some way or other and that made planning harder. She broke in on the other side of my existence also, a fact which caused me to wrangle with Dick and dig up reasons for my wandering interests.

Consumed with an intense desire to be near her, I dragged Dick off to town meetings and sat through muzzy and interminable debates in the hope of getting a stray glance from her. Her father had gone into politics soon after his arrival in town and had become a speaker of the florid, flag-waving type; I think that Mrs. Alden derived a good deal of pleasure from sitting in the gallery while he swayed public opinion on the floor beneath. For a time my veering ambition swung in this direction; I pictured myself in the halls of Congress—no small village matters for me—with Bess in the gallery and my remarks punctuated by loud and prolonged applause and breathless attention.

There was a good deal of fun at town meetings—too much fun and too little business, sometimes. Almost every one of the self-constituted leaders of opinion had his special hobby and took every conceivable opportunity to drag it into the debate until the tap of the Moderator's gavel brought him down from the heights of the empyrean. I remember that the reading of the article

"To see if the town will appropriate the sum of two thousand dollars for street repairs" was always the signal for John Burnham to rise and tell of the fine roads he had seen in Holland and France and move that the word "twenty" be substituted for "two." It never was, by the way, until the coming of the bicycle and later the automobile made good roads a necessity rather than a luxury. Then there was old Mr. Hichborn, who lost no chance to spit on his hands and wave the bloody shirt; his method of debate was to stride up and down before the platform and shake his fist in his opponents' faces. Dick and I were present on that glorious night when Joe Beeker, whose "mainmast wasn't stayed just so," according to Cap'n Waldron, rose in meeting and shouted "Mr. Muddywater!" and was cast forth after a long and bloody conflict.

In one way or another Dick has affected me in a good many ways, so much so that I am puzzled sometimes to decide just what part of my actions are due to myself and what part to his influence, but I think that in getting him interested in the conduct of government I have made the score nearly even. As the first glamor of seeing the wheels grind out their grist wore off he became vastly critical and developed theories of his own.

There were times, of course, when I made an arrant fool of myself, as all lovers do. One case in particular obtrudes itself on my memory; I give it to you with a great deal of hesitation, for I am heartily ashamed of myself. The thing that hurts about this particular memory is not that I behaved abominably but the fact that I was blamed instead of praised by the object of my devotion.

Through some piece of deviltry Bess had fallen out with authority and was condemned to be kept after school for a week. This in itself was no unusual circumstance; I myself suffered that punishment with great regularity. But on the third day of her incarceration—I had been

"kept after" that day, too—I passed the door of her school-room and heard her crying. To this day I remember the wave of hot rebellion against all authority which submerged my soul as I peered through the door and saw Bess bowed over her desk, her shoulders shaken by sobs. Her teacher, far from being moved by her manifestations of repentance, sat at her desk and hummed a tune and light-heartedly read a yellow backed novel. I saw red for a moment and stole away filled with an over-

powering thirst for revenge.

Where I got my ammunition I have forgotten; probably at the store. That part of the adventure has faded from my memory; I remember only that I waited in the early autumn dusk behind a carriage shed in Slater's Lane—Bess's teacher went home that way—with my pockets filled with eggs, shivering in the cold wind and making a futile effort to keep alive the hot flame of rancor. Despite my efforts the flame flickered and died down and went out entirely as her teacher and another from a lower grade approached along the narrow alley; she had treated me well the year before, when I had been in her class, and I was astonished to find myself looking at her with affection. I crouched low behind the stone wall; they were talking cheerfully, unaware that a desperate man lurked near them. But as they passed the flame leaped up again.

"But that Alden girl!" floated back to me, "I simply

can't do a thing with her!"

Her companion made commiserating noises.

"You bet you can't!" I thought darkly. "You let her alone."

"Sometimes she's a perfect little devil, and at other—" I set my teeth and flung my first egg; it sped between them and plopped against the side of Morgan's barn; I reached hastily for another, fumbled, dropped it—and bolted into the darkness of the carriage shed. I heard startled exclamations and slow returning foot-

steps as I burrowed in the dust under a low-bodied sleigh.

"Some one must have thrown it," I heard; then there was a silence during which I felt millions of eyes boring into the dimness of the shed.

"I see you; you'd better come out here."

I quivered, consoled myself with the reflection that it was manifestly impossible for them to see me through two inches of dusty plank, stifled a sneeze and lay quiet.

"It was probably one of those Portuguese children,"

I heard a low whisper.

I thanked Heaven for the Portuguese. There was a tribe of these black eyed youngsters down behind the fish houses, incorrigible evaders of restraint and fervent haters of everything connected with school.

"Perhaps," came the doubtful answer. "But my dear!

It might have hit us!"

"My new coat, too!"

"They may have more-"

The sounds of a hasty retreat came to me. They paused and inspected the place on the barn where my hasty shot had found its billet, then went on. I crept out, looked after them darkly and shook my fist—and then, at a sudden thought which popped into my mind, fled ingloriously. They would return, accompanied by Tibbets the cop; they would surely take out a warrant and have the town searched for the offender. I would leave school, I concluded, as I sped home by devious ways, stow away on a vessel in the harbor and thus avoid capture.

But before I left Whitehaven forever I must tell Bess; she would know the truth eventually, of course, but I thought it better to tell her myself. I was surprised to

find my action strongly condemned.

"That was horrid!" was her comment. And I had expected praise! I had a bitter feeling that the whole world was against me.

"But don't you hate her?" I stumbled. "Why should I?" She seemed perplexed.

"I saw you crying-" I hesitated.

She flamed forth in wrath. "That isn't your business at all."

"But I thought-" I stopped, warned by a dangerous look in her eye.

Then: "Did you hit her?" she asked eagerly.

"No such luck." I shoved my hands gloomily in my pockets, found the remaining eggs, and reflected that at least I shouldn't starve to death when I stowed away.

Strangely enough she seemed disappointed. I was blamed for throwing the egg and then blamed for not throwing it straight. It was a rotten world. Perhaps later, when I came back disguised with a beard, she would know better.

I started away slowly. Bess called me back, leaning over the railing of the porch, a faint white figure in the dusk.

"Promise me you'll never do anything like that again," she commanded in a low voice.

I promised, sulkily enough. Nothing seemed to matter very much.

"Because if you do"— she swooped down and something warm and soft brushed my cheek-"I'll never kiss you again."

A flutter of short skirts, a twinkle of slim legs, and the door slammed behind her. She approved, she disapproved; she had blamed me—and then kissed me. I stood gawking at the closed door with my mouth open.

Then I went home, gloomily silent at one moment and at the next whistling and reconsidering my intention of fleeing. I was immensely puzzled. We men often go

home in that state of mind.

I had queer ideas then—as I have now. One of these queer ideas was that people were open to reason, that if something better than the existing state of affairs were shown them they would at once abandon the old and welcome the new. This was the first of my disillusionments. For I evolved a plan for revolutionizing White-haven's commercial life and was laughed at for my pains. I was not the first who had gone out clad in fresh ideas from head to foot and come home in a metaphorical barrel, but that didn't help my injured feelings in the slightest.

How I came to conceive this wild, chimerical idea I don't know; perhaps its seed was some chance remark caught from the group about the stove in the store; perhaps I caught it from my father. I must have nursed my plan for a long time before I confided it to my father and got his permission to try it out; I think that I had some lurking doubts about its practical application. It was so simple that surely some one must have thought of it before. But as I matured the idea I lost this feeling of distrust and when I finally told my father of it doubt had been supplanted by unqualified belief.

This scheme of mine was nothing less than a consolidation of the three Whitehaven stores; not a consolidation, exactly, but a plan for cooperative buying. As it was then, each one of the stores bought from a different wholesale house in Boston; our goods came from Hatherly's, the Patch Brothers favored Durrel and Whiting, and Adams and Bridges bought their goods from some smaller concern, either Joslin or the Kingsley Company, I have forgotten which. As a result of this all three stores suffered. I know that we very seldom split our orders and it was the same with the others. Our orders were never large and as a result we obtained poor rates and almost no discounts at all. Splitting orders would make it worse. But—and here was the germ of my plan—increasing our orders would secure us better terms. And we couldn't very well increase our orders as it was then; we lacked the storage space, for one thing.

The only solution, of course, was for the three stores

to pool their buying, order large lots and get the best discounts possible.

I told my father about it one night, when I had finally got it all clearly fixed in my mind. My idea was that all three stores should join in dealing with the wholesale houses, doing their buying together. This would in no way interfere with competition—I avoided that rock—but it would surely give us all an advantage over the wholesale men.

"You see how it would save money?" I concluded. "This piecemeal buying plays directly into their hands. You can't split your orders because then it wouldn't be worth their time to bother—and Hatherly might shut down on your line of credit. . . . Don't you think it's a good scheme?"

He considered for a moment, whistling softly to himself. Finally he nodded. "Yes, it's a mighty good scheme," he admitted. "But——"

Again he considered, shook his head, smiled to himself

and then gave my idea his unqualified approval.

"You're right, from first to last," he said. "It would save us money—and so it would for Adams and Frank Patch. Have you seen them yet?"

I hadn't considered the actual working out of my plan

and this direct question rather startled me.

"No?" queried my father. "Well, I'll go in with you; now you go around and rope them in."

I hesitated. "See them myself?"

"Sure," he said in surprise. "It's your plan, you know." So I started out, that same night, to see old Mr. Adams and Frank Patch; started out to revolutionize commerce with an idea and boundless enthusiasm. I have laughed since at the recollection of that quixotic excursion, but I didn't laugh then; I was sixteen and as deadly serious as only youth can be.

Old Mr. Adams listened to me coldly as I told him my plan, looked at me over his spectacles, looked at me

under his spectacles—and refused to have anything to do with it.

"You tell your father," he said severely, turning again to his paper, "that if he wants my help he can come and ask for it himself."

"But this is my own idea," I protested.

He emerged from behind his paper barricade and glared at me. "He knows about it, doesn't he?"

"I went to him first, of course."

"Then he's back of it." Again the barricade went up. "But you can't catch John K. Adams with that kind of salt; he's too old a bird."

I tiptoed out feeling that I was lucky to escape so easily.

I came off rather worse with Frank Patch. He misunderstood me from the first, thought that I was trying to induce him to abandon Durrel and Whiting, and waxed purple and indignant.

"No, sir!" he declared. "I've known Durrel since he warn't no taller'n you and hadn't no more sense neither; he's good enough for me and always will be."

I went off, leaving him snorting and thrashing about, and sneaked home through back alleys.

"Well, son, when do we start?" my father asked cheerfully.

"I guess we don't start at all." I told him how my plan had been received. "They didn't understand; they wouldn't let me explain; they—I don't see anything laughable about it."

My father straightened up and wiped his eyes. "I'm not laughing at you, nor at your plans; they're both all right. But to try such a thing on John Adams and that suspicious old hard-shell of a Patch!"

"I don't just see——" I began, but he waved me down.
"One time," he said dreamily, "when I was a boy running around town, somebody gave me a knife for a birthday present—knife with a big shiny blade, regular toad-

sticker. And of course I started out to carve me a boat -just as you used to. But-and mark this, son-instead of picking out a nice soft piece of pine I took a big hunk of iron-wood that some one of the Coffins had brought home from the Indies-beautiful piece of wood it was, all crinkly-grained, but nothing was too good for the new knife. Well, I hacked away at that wood for nearly a week, dulled the knife, broke the point of the blade, got blisters on my hands and at the end was no further along than when I started. Guess I'd be hacking away yet if my father hadn't come out in the woodshed one day while I was sweating away over it. He looked at the wood and then at my hands and then laughed so he had to sit down on the chopping block. 'Always suit your tool to your wood, son, always suit your tool to your wood,' he told me. I've never forgotten it."

And neither have I.

Later, while I was still in high school, we added a delivery team to our equipment. This brought the three stores in closer competition; where previously they had been isolated and in a measure ignoring the existence of the others they were now brought into direct conflict. Ours was the first delivery team in town; although the others scoffed at first and then followed our lead we had the advantage of them.

Perhaps Mr. Patch and old Adams regretted that they hadn't given my idea a trial, after all. I know that I consoled myself with the thought that the world seemed to consider whiskers and wisdom as synonymous. Wait till I sprouted the outward manifestations of sagacity

and they would see.

And, waiting, I absorbed wisdom from the "Fire Worshipers." This was my father's name for the tribunal about the rusty iron stove in the store, a self constituted court of high decision on all matters. They discussed everything with greater or less wisdom, conducting vagrant and interminable debates on politics, methods of

rigging, religion, genealogy and the comparative merits of chanties and shore songs. I give you fragmentary samples.

"Married a Baker from up the shore road. Nephew to old Sam Baker that owned the Arabella. Worthless cuss."

"Summer people is dogfishes. And anybody that stands up for them is a dum-head." (This, I recall, upon the coming of Mr. Bradford, who built the first summer place on the Point.)

"I never saw a whaler yet with as much gimp in him as a tame sheep."

"Put that in your pipe and smoke it,' says I. And he never let a yip out of him for the rest of the voyage."

Quite frequently these debates were punctuated by references to that chief character of New England mythol-

ogy, the omniscient and elusive Feller.

"They'll skin you without you nail your hide to your bones, as the Feller says," Cap'n Billy Waldron would declaim. And Eben Curtis, High Priest of the Established Order, would counter by quoting the Feller to exactly opposite intent. Or Jim Knowles, that reincarnation of Ecclesiastes, that quotation from Khayyam, would jingle the keys in his pocket mournfully and mediate between the two.

"Well, so far as I can see you're both right," he would say. "If the Republicans get in it'll be the damnation ruination of the country, as Eben says; and if the Democrats get their clutches on the windpipe of Prosperity there'll be women and children crying for bread in the streets of Whitehaven, as Cap'n Billy has pointed out. We're going on the rocks, anyway, with nobody at the hellum, as the Feller says."

I must have listened to many hundreds such arguments at one time or another. I remember the occasional jingle of sleigh bells outside; the glare of the snow, reflected on the beamed ceiling; the dusky revolving shadows of the passersby; the eddying veils of tobacco smoke

over the field of combat. But I also remember that my part was solely that of listener. I listened, thought, evolved my own ideas, and ended by keeping them to myself. The world was unappreciative.

## VI

I was eighteen before I discovered that others beside myself planned futures. Dick, the unimaginative, merely tolerated my flights of fancy; Elizabeth listened and forebore comment, although I was secretly convinced that she envied and admired. But as for planning for herself—had the wooden eagle figurehead of the Mary Hawes flapped its wings and aspired to flight my surprise could scarcely have been greater. Ambition, in my mind, was a manly attribute, something on the line of chewing tobacco and shaving. Girls never thought of such things.

It was in the June of my senior year in school. I had found Bess and Hilda Stowell in a little wind-made cup atop of one of the highest dunes—found them accidentally, of course. I would have much preferred to have gone swimming over in the marsh, where the water was warmer and bathing suits were unknown, but I convinced myself that I was getting rather old for that sort of thing and that it was too dirty over there and—an infinite number of reasons beside the real one that I had seen Bess leave the house dressed for swimming and knew that I would find her at the beach. It is easy to deceive one-self at eighteen. I found them and was secretly disappointed at finding Hilda.

We lay at length among the grasses on the western slope of the dune, peering over the edge and basking in the warm afternoon sun; that is, Bess and I did the basking and Hilda sat between us under a sunshade and busied herself over some mysterious piece of embroidery. Hilda was one of Dick's sisters; she was fully four years older than either Bess or myself, engaged to be married and

disposed to consider us very small children indeed. "Victorian" scarcely describes Hilda—I dislike the term, for at best it is but an importation. Hilda really belonged to the times before the war—the Civil War—when little girls wore pantelettes and polite conversation was confined to tatting and jam recipes instead of straying to uncomfortable subjects such as woman's place in the general scheme of things. I think she was secretly shocked at the amount of flesh displayed by my abbreviated attire, for I remember that she shifted the sunshade and spoke to me from ambush. Bess, with her slim legs thrust out from beneath the short skirt of her bathing suit, must have been another source of vexation to Hilda. She was eternally being shocked at something.

Hilda started the wrangle, I think, with an ill-judged comment on college. Dick and I were going together in the fall, I because I planned to be a doctor or surgeon, I've forgotten which, and Dick simply because he wanted to go. . . . Neither of us were "sent" to college; we both "went." Perhaps the distinction as I make it is scarcely a clear one, but in my mind college men are divided in two great classes—those who go and those who are sent.

"I think it's all foolishness," asserted Hilda. "It would be different if he knew what he was going to be, but he doesn't know. Doctors need Latin and—and all that; so do druggists and lawyers. But he says he isn't going

to be a doctor or a lawyer or a druggist."

"I'm not exactly sure what I'll be," I reminded her.

"You're both alike," affirmed Hilda placidly. Hers was the kind of mind which crystallizes at an early age; having one's future unsettled was not only negligent but criminal, in her eyes.

"It's foolish," she reiterated. "As though you couldn't

choose just as well now!"

Bess moved restlessly on the other side of the intruding sunshade. "You're envious," she asserted, "you'd like to go too."

Hilda was stung to indignant denial of envy. "Well, I should," said Bess, "and I will, too."

"After you graduate?" I asked, pricking up my ears

at the news. Bess still had another year in high school. Bess was uncertain. "Perhaps," she admitted, "and perhaps not until the year after that. I'm not sure."

She squirmed deeper into the sand and sent little avalanches down the sloping face of the dune. This reference to uncertainty bordered on the financial and we avoided it. Probably Mr. Alden had some grandiose plan, as usual.

"I'm not fooling," she went on, as Hilda laughed in an irritating fashion. "I'm not going to stay around here after I get through school. You wouldn't want to, would you?" She appealed to me.

"Not on your life," I answered warmly. "But—it's

different with you. You see-" I hesitated.

"I'm a girl and ought to be content to stay at home and play rag dolls," she completed the sentence for me. "Well, I'm not. I want to get away and do things just as much as you do."

"But what college?" demanded the practical Hilda.

"You don't mean Normal School, do you?"

"And teach grubby little third grade kids all my life?" answered Bess with a sniff of disdain. "I mean a regular college—Vassar, perhaps, or Smith or Wellesley. I don't know which."

Poor Bess! Alden's last and most magnificent venture, the Klondike trip, came at the time when she would have gone to college, and when the tide of fortune began to show a gentle flow in her mother's direction Bess had been four years and more out of school and had given up her ambitions. I wonder—but no matter.

Then Hilda began that most damnable form of torture, pinning a vaguely ambitious mind down to concrete expressions.

"And what would you do after college?" she asked,

greatly engrossed in her sewing. "Teach, perhaps? I forgot; you said that you didn't like teaching. What, then?"

"Music?" she suggested, as Bess failed to answer. She knew as well as I that Bess hated music.

"No," Bess hesitated. "Something-"

"Something—" encouraged Hilda, with a hint of mimicry in her voice.

Bess sulked at being driven into a corner.

"You'll see," she prophesied darkly.

"You might be a nurse," suggested Hilda helpfully.

I entertained a fleeting image of Bess, always restless, being tied down to some querulous old invalid, and in spite of myself I laughed. "A swell nurse you'd make," I said, "and besides, you don't learn that at college."

Hilda went on with her list. "There's stenography or you might try telephone operating. No? I'm afraid that a college education wouldn't help you much in either of those. But what would it help you in?"

Bess muttered something unintelligible—I think that she swore. Certainly the circumstances justified profanity. Hilda was encouraged to add another profession, thinking perhaps to crown her list of impossibilities with a final absurdity.

"You might go on the stage," she suggested.

If she expected an indignant denial she was greatly

disappointed.

"How did you guess?" asked Bess, surprised and confused—just a trifle too much surprised and confused. Under an arc of the sunshade I saw her eyes raised to Hilda's in simulated amazement.

Hilda looked down on her, half doubting and half convinced.

"You don't mean it," she concluded.

"But I do—really," answered Bess. She sat up, cross legged, and chanted the refrain of one of the popular songs of that day; something to the effect that some-

body had better keep his eye on tricky little Sarah. She swung to and fro as she sang; Hilda watched her, fascinated.

"But Bess," she exclaimed, "I was only fooling—I didn't mean—you wouldn't really be an actress, would you?" There was a note of horror in her voice.

"Uh huh," nodded Bess, her eyes fixed on the distant horizon. "I think it would be great; flowers—applause—curtain calls——" Her voice trailed off into visions.

"Do you think that I want to stay in this poky hole all my life?" she added after a moment.

That brought us both down on her. In my soul I knew that Bess was right; Whitehaven was a "poky hole." But Hilda and I were natives and Bess wasn't; it was all right for a native to criticize the town but criticism from an outsider was another matter. And in Whitehaven all people were outsiders until they had at least one generation in the graveyard.

It was an inconclusive and unsatisfactory wrangle; we all three fought about different things. I found trouble in getting in a word here and there and the two girls shifted ground and changed their base of attack with bewildering rapidity. Bess reverted to the question of going to college. Hilda made the mistake of holding up her own life as a model and almost cried as Bess skillfully took prop after prop from under her and left her not a leg to stand on. I gave up my part of the discussion; a flock of shore birds came wheeling to the beach below, following the retreating waves in rhythmic dance as I watched. I searched about for pebbles to flip at them, paying little attention to the battle on the other side of the sun shade.

It finally ended, as most feminine arguments do, by both generously admitting that the other was right, while at the same time each brought in a maze of qualifying clauses which quite obscured the main issues.

They broke off, finally, and Bess and I went down for

a final dip before going home. I was puzzled more than a little, and as we waded out dripping I asked a question which had perplexed me.

"You didn't really mean that?" I asked.

Bess bent over to wring out her scanty skirt.

"Mean what?"

"About going on the stage."

"No, I didn't," she said frankly. "I'd like to, but I'm not good looking enough and I can't sing. And my folks wouldn't let me. But I had to say something, didn't I?"

"It was a mean trick to try to pin you down like that,"

I agreed.

As we went up the beach together she turned and waved back at Hilda. "I could have scratched her," she

said in a spiteful little burst.

"I don't know what I want to do," she said presently, "any more than you know. Something—but what? If I was a boy father could get me an appointment to Annapolis. That's out of the question, of course. . . . Being a girl isn't much fun."

VII

The summer after our graduation from high school was spent in much the same manner as other summers—Dick away with the fleet and I in the store. The Mary Hawes came home only once, and then it was a week day and I had only an hour or two with Dick. I fitted up the Shadow anew, made leather cushions for the cockpit, and Bess and I went sailing along the coast and about the harbor nearly every Sunday. A sleepy, quiet summer, and yet one of the happiest of my remembrances.

Dick came home a few days before college opened. It was at his suggestion, I think, that we sailed down to the Island on the day before our departure for college. It was our last trip to Buck's Island, although neither of

us thought of it in that light as we set out.

It was one of those cool, clear September days, when brown cheeked Summer decks herself in goldenrod and makes the most of her last few days, warned by the first flaming maple leaves that autumn is near. We sailed in the early morning; there was scarcely enough wind to fill the Shadow's sails, not enough to ripple the long smooth swells. Dick was at the helm—a tribute to his superior seamanship—and he steered inshore as close as he dared, following each dip and undulation of the coast instead of standing straight across for the Island as we usually did. As we slid along in the crisp sunshine each point and inlet brought back some memory; in a way our boyhood passed in review before us as we went along.

Here we had landed to pick blueberries, and fied in terror from what we believed to be a bear but which proved to be one of Haskell's sheep, browsing in the underbrush. A glimpse of white birch trunks recalled that here we had stripped the bark for shingling the roof of the cabin. Behind that bluff we had snared rabbits, and high on that cliff was a shallow cave whence we had routed an entirely imaginary band of pirates with great glory to ourselves. We grew tenderly reminiscent over all these boyhood memories, looking back on them through the mists of antiquity—some of them were almost six or eight years distant—and almost wished ourselves boys again. Dick was nineteen and I was some two months younger.

It was noon when we arrived at the Island and sailed into the little harbor. We landed, brought our grub ashore, dislodged the rabbits which had preëmpted our hut, and kindled a rousing fire in the fireplace. After dinner we climbed the cliffs above the cabin and sat in our old nook under the pine tree, with the sea and the rock-fringed coast at our feet. Three barges, riding high and southward bound, drew slowly along the taut line of the horizon in the wake of a tug; we watched them and talked intermittently of many things and finally fell silent in the drowsy afternoon hush, with only the low swish of the

waves and the shrill cries of the wheeling gulls to break our thoughts.

Dick broke the golden charm.

"Great, isn't it? Sea—sunshine—we're going to miss this, Jack."

He yawned, rolled over and sat up.

"Gee, I feel wise, and all-powerful and—and hungry. Run down and get me a piece of that pie we had left over, will you?"

"Pie?" I said drowsily. "I hate the word, as I hate

work, all exercise and thee. Get it yourself."

We grappled and scuffled about in a fierce combat on the pine needles. Dick finally sat on my chest and proceeded to give me a "barber shave," which is a method of rubbing the short hairs at the back of the neck in a manner calculated to provoke tears.

"Going to get that pie?" he paused to ask.

"I will-and eat it, too."

We raced down to the hut, devoured the remnants of the pie and then went swimming in the cove. All afternoon we swam about, dove off the rocks and built sand forts on the tiny beach. We laid vast systems of waterworks, using the hollow stems of kelp for pipes, dug harbors and canals, and in general acted as though we were only boys, instead of men ready to enter college. The afternoon wore on and the evening chill was in the air as we dressed and went up the winding path to the cabin and supper. We ate a silent meal and packed our stuff for the trip home.

"Young Claffin asked me for the key last week," I said as we took a last look around. "He and the other kids came down in that old dory they patched up. Shall I give it to him?"

"They'll break in if you don't, I suppose," answered Dick. "And yet——"

He stopped. Perhaps he felt as I did; we all welcome

new things and yet dislike to abandon the old. Our eyes met; the same thought was in both our minds.

"And they'd have the fun of building another," he said

soberly. "That was half the fun, anyway."

"Go ahead," I said, and went down the path to the Shadow, our pots and pans jangling in a blanket on my back. I stowed them in the bow, pushed off until the Shadow was nearly afloat, and sat down to wait for Dick. Five minutes—ten minutes, and he came silently across the narrow beach. He nodded in answer to my questioning look, then shoved off and sprang into the stern. We poled out of the little harbor, caught the evening breeze and stood off in the twilight for home.

From the seaward side the amphitheater where the cabin stood was hidden; the Island loomed a black, pine-topped mass against the faint silver-gray of the sea. Then as we watched, there was a pulse of red against the velvet dusk of the eastern sky. Blackness again, more intense for the contrast. A second throb of red, then a steady mounting orange glow which streamed silently upward through the evening calm. The pines stood silhouetted against the glare, flat figures of black; a faint wavering path of red spread out over the ripples toward us, our sail took on a faint morning glow of rose as the flames spread and mounted. We watched in silence as the Shadow plowed along, the little waves in our wake shimmering faintly for a moment and then sliding off, lost in blackness. streamed brighter and brighter; there was a faint, muffled crash of falling timbers; the sparks streamed upward in fright and the light faded to a dim gleam among the pines. It wavered, faded, and vanished in the darkness. We turned and sailed on toward the lights of town, building out long beckoning spars across the water.

We left the next day.

## CHAPTER THE FOURTH

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I skip the first two years of my college life. Few things worth recording happened. I did barely enough work to pass my courses, made spasmodic efforts at reformation and failed to reform. I fell in with a happy-go-lucky crowd and drifted with them, having a good time and

doing the minimum of work.

That seems to cover the first year, at least. Neither Dick nor I permanently undermined our constitutions by overwork. I flunked math and Dick flunked Cæsar. Dick passed math with an astonishingly high rating and I made the sharks' division in Horace and stayed there. We were each a little mystified at the other's failure and at our own successes. In the second year Stowell branched off into higher mathematics and embryo engineering work; I concentrated on Romance languages, because they came easily to me and required the least concentration. Simple quadratics are cryptograms to Dick now; my Latin has gone like the sparkle of the fons Bandusia, splendidior ritro.

The most important event of the two years seems something only slightly connected with college. I had an affair with a town girl, the daughter of a soggy fat man who kept a barber shop in which he moped and snored grossly and drank bitters from a bottle labeled "Dandruff Cure." Despite this parental handicap I was hard hit by Connie; why, I don't know, unless because I was at the age when one is either hard hit or not hit at all. Certainly Connie was attractive, with a certain plump prettiness and a way of saying "Hello!" dividing the

word into three syllables, which lingers still in my memory. We went to dances together; my bill at the livery stable became a thing of magnificent proportions; I lost what little rank I had in my classes.

And in the end I was thrown over flat for another swain. The light of the world was extinguished. Water fights with their accompaniment of sloppiness and janitorial wrath had lost their savor. There was no pleasure now in midnight feeds at Scottie's; it was no longer devilish and sad-doggish to cross the campus, dim and shadowy as a roofless Greek temple in the moonlight, waking the echoes and sluggard upperclassmen with barber shop renditions of the salubrity of existence in our "castle, castle, castle on the re-he-he-ver Rhine!"

I gave up everything and took to wearing flannel shirts

and shaving only twice a week.

I can afford to smile now, but at the time my overthrow was material for dark and dismal tragedy. Strangely enough, Elizabeth failed to enter into the affair at all. My feelings toward her were unchanged. I went with Connie because others of my crowd went with town girls; because squiring her to dances proved me a man among men; because it appealed to me as the romantic thing to do. And I see now that it was not my rejection that hurt, but the realization—added by a timely notice from the Dean's office—that I had made a fool of myself. I remade that discovery many times in my later life, but this first realization hurt worst of all. . . .

I had a wretched time of it for the rest of that year. So far my college career had been an utter and abject failure; I was a man apart, without friends. Stowell had his own crowd by this time, a circle of budding engineers who talked a strange jargon of logarithms and elevations which was beyond my comprehension. I had cut loose from my own crowd and found myself poor company. I became supersensitive and spent long hours in the library, absorbing endless books.

I must have exaggerated immensely, for I left that June with the firm intention of never returning. But during that summer, in the saner air of Whitehaven, I regained my perspective and began to look forward to September and college again. I came to see that this affair was not an end in itself, but the lopping off of a branch which had threatened to overshadow and crowd out wood of sounder growth. I made up my mind to go back and do some real work; two years wasn't much, but it was at least a chance to redeem myself. During my self-inflicted isolation of the spring I had added greatly to my knowledge of Romance literature—more for lack of other employment than with any idea of serious study. I fell in with Estey, the white haired, precisely spoken head of the French department; he ignored the fact of my blasted career and treated me like a white man. I was properly grateful and began to speculate on futures connected with the teaching of modern languages.

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During that summer the electric cars invaded White-haven. In spring vacation Dick had lugged a rod in the surveying gang, just for the practice. He performed to the admiration of all beholders—save myself, who could see no fun in working for fun—and that summer McNally, head of construction, gave him authority over a transit. Later, the survey finished, he had plenary powers over a gang of Italians, building out a fill across the marsh. I helped him by giving him some Italian phrases calculated to inspire industry. I saw very little of him; he was busy and so was I. My father took his first vacation in years, went two voyages in the Mary Hawes and left me in full charge of the store, with Joe Grigsby to help me.

Dick came into the store one evening, during the dull hour just before closing time.

"How's the work?" he asked, perching on the counter

and swinging his legs.

"Hard labor, Dick," I answered, only too glad to be interrupted in my checking up of accounts. "I had no idea the old gent worked so hard. Guess he needed a vacation. Is the fill coming along all right?"

Bess and I had driven out the week before to inspect his work, and Dick had boasted of the fact that his gang was far ahead of the crew who were building out from the further side of the marsh.

He nodded in answer to my question. "We'll make connections in a week," he said without interest.

"Still ahead?"

"Still ahead. But they have to haul their gravel further, you know."

"You'll have time for a week's lay-off, then, before we go back."

"Um."

"I'll be glad to get back," I went on awkwardly. "I'm going to plug this year. I've been a good deal of a fool so far; now I'm going to settle down and work."

"So am I," he agreed.

"You always have." There was no need of stating the contrast between us. "I've reserved that corner room in Franklin House this year. It's quiet—no freshmen around—and we could fix it up fairly well. Suit you?"

"That's a good room," he assented absently. "Perhaps
—I might as well tell you before you make any more plans.
I'm not going back."

His statement took me completely by surprise. One of the things which had influenced my decision to return had been the fact that I would not go back alone. I was unable to imagine college without Dick.

"On the level?" I managed to ask.

He nodded.

"I thought you were getting along all right," I expos-

tulated. "It isn't a matter of money, is it? Or have your folks---"

"Convinced me that I'm wasting my time?" he laughed. "Hardly; I think that I've convinced them about that. And I'm not quitting, exactly; I'm transferring to Tech."

"And how long have you had this under your hat?" I

asked reproachfully.

"Ever since last winter," he admitted. "Old Dude Colby advised me to transfer if I could get the credits fixed up. I fixed it. I lose half a year, but I can take straight engineering now, without any of the frills. But I wasn't sure until last week—and there was no use in telling you and then having to back down. You see?"

I saw. I had felt precisely the same about my half formed resolutions of abandoning college. "But what's the idea?" I inquired. "I know that you'll be able to get more and better technical stuff, but what are you going to plug for? Chemistry? Physics? Civil engineering?"

"Mining engineering," he answered, with the air of one mentioning sacred things. "It's a great profession. McNally—the boss, you know—is an M. E. and I've been talking it up with him all summer. It's the only thing for me, I'm sure of that."

I voiced a legitimate objection. "Have you ever seen a mine, Dick? Aren't you going it blind—letting the romantic side of mining influence you too much?"

He looked at me with a trace of amusement. I wonder if he realized then how much of my own life was founded

upon the purely romantic aspect of things?

"There's not much romance about it," he answered. "From what I know it's hard work and lots of it. Romance doesn't appeal to me as much as—to some other people. I'm not built that way. The harder and solider a thing is the better I like it. I want to get down to bed rock. And mining is bed rock."

He broke off, a little ashamed of his self analysis, "And

you never heard of a mining engineer dying poor, did

"I never heard of one dying at all, Dick; perhaps they're so busy they forget to die." I felt hurt, not at parting from Dick, but that he was going somewhere that I couldn't go. I realized that this meant the definite divergence of our ways. For the first time I had a sense of limitation. "But it's as good a way as any of making a living, I suppose."

"Yes," he agreed vaguely. "I suppose I'll see you before you go back—and during vacations. You can find time to drive out and see me, anyway. Come out and hear me swear in Dago—I've improved a lot lately. But

in case you don't have time-"

He slid down and offered me his hand. We both had a dread of slopping over into sentiment; we shook hands stiffly, in absurd formality, and he went out.

I saw him only once between this announcement and my department for college, and then only at a distance. I was going into Boston on some errand or other; just outside town the railroad ran parallel to the new construction, at a distance of about a hundred yards. As I looked out of the window I saw Dick. He and the other boss stood at the ends of their respective tongues of earth—the two ends of the fill were nearly touching now—and bombarded each other with clods of earth, their two gangs grinning from a safe distance. As I watched, a well aimed shot of Dick's took the other man in the chest; he waved his arms in triumph and then turned on his gang with mock ferocity. As I craned my neck backward I saw them fall to shoveling furiously.

That was the last time I saw Dick for over four years. There were letters between us, to be sure, but as time went on they came at longer and longer intervals. It was surprising how little we had in common. Dick left Tech without graduating; I remember receiving a post card from him announcing that he had "got aboard" with a

South American mining syndicate. I sent him a long letter in reply, thought of him frequently for almost a week, envied him, and then almost forgot him. By the time he reappeared I had forgotten him.

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These two events, my separation from Dick and this affair with Connie, overshadow all my memories of college. All else seems subordinate, although no doubt more momentous things happened during the four years. But the identity of these more momentous things . . . that is precisely what troubles me. They are not to be identified. I recall a fragment of a lecture by Daddy Bowles, occupant of the Beardsley Chair of English Literature.

He lifted his voice in lamentation. "There is no literature dealing with college men," he wailed. "We have stories infinite of shop girls, cowboys, sailors, brokers, farm hands—but, beyond a few ephemeral and distorted tales of athletics and keg parties, nothing of the college man. Why? Why?"

"I'll bite; why?" floated an irreverent voice from the rear seats, and the resultant search for the offender has erased Daddy's solution from my mind—if, indeed, he offered one. He had a singular facility for propounding the unanswerable, as his quiz papers testified.

I offer my own solution. The true story of a man's four years in college is a story of intellectual shifting and rearranging. There is no plot, no continuity in it; its coherence is that of a sand dune. To attempt analysis is to bring the entire structure down about your ears in confusion. My own college story is that of this unstable intellectual changing, of fleeting ideas caught in passing, of slow accretions from vagrant winds. I gained and lost, gave and withheld, retained what pleased me and molded it to my own ends. I changed, as every man changes during this period, whether in college or not.

But after many years it is difficult to recall this process of losing or gaining, save to remember and appreciate that it took place. Memory is a palimpsest; I catch occasional glimpses and flashes of the old text here and there, but these fragments are overwritten and obscured by what has since occurred. Once, when the record was clear and unsmudged by distance, Langdon and Graves and I did a fair job of analyzing. But I give you that in its proper place. . . .

Chief figure of what confused memories I have is Jerry Graves, wandering along with his Hibernian expanse of prehensile upper lip, his half smile and half frown and his eternal readiness to wage verbal warfare over anything that might present itself. He took Dick's place with me, mainly because I had had the foresight to engage a room and he, in his characteristically negligent fashion, had found himself without a roof to cover him. During the first week of our joint occupancy of the corner room in old Franklin House some mad, mad wag painted a death's head on the door; it is there yet, for all I know,

wide, wide world for these last twenty years.

I remember Graves chiefly for his remarkable ability and his no less remarkable indolence. He was a born critic, destructive and yet constructive, brilliant when he wished to be brilliant and most astoundingly dull when a subject failed to interest him. He was, and is yet, one of the infrequent few who cheerfully abandon minor advantages for the privilege of criticizing the world at large and his associates in particular.

although Coffin and Graves have been safe at last in the

It was through Graves that during those two years our room became the center of attraction for most of the thinking men of that college generation. Not all of them, I know, for there were other groups about college at the same time—a crowd of sharks who had riotous evenings over the Greek tragedies; the college politicians, vastly mysterious over elections and the unbalance of power be-

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tween fraternities; the athletic crowd, closely allied to the politicians, and a vast Milky Way of other groups, all founded on mutual interests and all more or less interwoven. Our own connection, as a group, was a tenuous one; our interests overlapped and passed the boundaries of the narrow circle of college life with which these others were concerned. We took pride in being different. We failed to worship the past, to the scandal of the purely intellectuals; we had a proper sense of the relative unimportance of the present, an attitude which antagonized the seekers after collegiate honors. As nearly as I can define it, we were all more or less radicals—and yet in no way to be confused with present-day collegiate radicals with ideas on Socialism, prohibition, labor problems, and, as I write, pacifism and other subjects connected with war. We were simply radical. We were against things: we were blatantly against things. We talked, we debated. we criticized—all in faithful imitation of the pinwheel which makes a great splutter but not much progress.

I remember our wrangles as staccato outbursts rather than as connected and logical expositions; a completed sentence was a rarity and adherence to a direct line of thought an unknown thing. Contact with one another always provoked intermittent electrical discharges of flashing and incompleted ideas; heat lightning, playing harmlessly among the clouds from pipes and cigarettes which always swirled about the room—harmless discharges and sometimes not very illuminating. We all wanted to talk, none came with the purpose of listening. We were all very sincere and very earnest and very ignorant. The real world was as unreal to us as an architect's elevation. All the lines were there and a great deal of the detail, but of the structure and internal arrangement, of the cunning balance of interwoven thrust and strain we were entirely ignorant. We were outside the building and could only speculate on these things.

But it was fun and very good for us.



## FLOOD TIDE

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Many men came and went and a few came and stayed. Graves, of course, was always there with his methodical flashes of industry and his eternal readiness to argue. A fairly frequent visitor was Ted Langdon, editor of the college paper. He came primarily to listen, but was always drawn into the argument. When beaten he would embody his views in an editorial and give us no chance of rebuttal. It was very irritating and unfair. others who partook of the character of charter members; Cameron, a voluble and prodigal Scotchman with a tendency to mistake noise for logic; a lanky man from Vermont and a tubby man from Illinois, both budding authorities on law; a man named Joy who wrote neat little essays and sirupy poems for the moribund Lit, and talked like a longshoreman. They drifted in and out, became more or less identified with other groups, and ultimately returned to dispute and scrap with Graves.

I was a fair sample of the lot, I imagine. For a time I hitched up with the intellectual faction, the culturists; there was a spasmodic interest among them that year in the connection between late Latin and Provençal. Then I discovered that my length of leg promised a future in the line of high jumping, and for a time I hung on the fringes of the athletic crowd. Again, I revived my interest in painting, did some decorative stuff for the funny sheet, illustrated jokes when some one supplied the joke, and was ultimately elected to the board. But these were side issues; my main interest, I can see now, was the incendiary radicalism and futurism which flickered and flared and guttered with Graves ever in the center of the conflagration.

IV

As I think of these undergraduate "beefs" I get more of the physical than the mental atmosphere. I have an impression of men sprawling about, generally avoiding the center of the room; there were usually a good half dozen

occupants of the two couches which filled the darker angle of the room, the first comers reclining at ease and speaking mysteriously from behind the backs of those who came later. I have an impression of Graves, dividing his time between discussion and ineffectual efforts at concentration on a battered typewriter. Sometimes there was a subsidiary group before the fireplace; more frequently the fireplace was cold and cheerless, due to Cameron's prodigality with our fuel. I remember the gray and black figures of the huntsmen on the wall paper—a relic of the days when Franklin House had been the residence of old Professor Franklin and this room his study-forever caracolling gayly behind the shifting blue strate of smoke. They had been silent and unheeding witnesses of generations of arguments such as ours since first they set out in quest of the bench-legged stag, just beyond their view around the corner of the mantel; I imagine that they have heard the same subjects discussed in the same ways many times since. Their quest, with its silent view-halloos and ceaseless riding through impossible gray forests, was as endless and eternal as ours.

The physical side of it is clear enough, impressed on my memory by frequent repetition, but the mental side of it seems to elude me. I have no doubt that there was much transitory talk of athletics. The same is true of ohms and hexameters and gerunds. I remember hot discussions on Darwinism as opposed to Christianity; I recall a wrangle on the possibility of inter-stellar communication which raged during one examination period and left the stars as distant as before; a man from West Virginia, with first hand information on feuds, inspired us to debate on the comparative sanctity of life and property; I remember that Langdon struck out on a weird line of thought and surprised us all—until some one else read Butler's Erewhon. I remember wordy arguments on Bryanism—how the old subjects do persist!

Only one of these wrangles stands out beyond the

others. At the time it was but one discussion of many; I remember it now because it was, in a way, prophetic. We talked of efficiency—and this, mind you, was in the dim depths of the middle '90's. Truly there is no new thing under the sun.

Graves started it, as ever. He always tossed out the bones over which we fought.

"There's a devil of a lot of waste in the world," he said reflectively.

"Always has been," said some morose body.

"No reason why there always should be," offered Cameron with superhuman wisdom.

"The inertia of the old order-" began some hidden orator.

"Rot!" broke in Graves. "That's outside the case. We've been going so fast that we're bound to waste. Everything of late has been big—the bigger the better. And big things always run to waste."

"For example?"

"Everywhere," said Graves, magnificently vague, "railroads, government, foundries——" he made an all-inclusive gesture and knocked a book to the floor. He stooped and recovered it. "Yes, even in the book store. Here's old Nick Machiavelli's "Prince." I ordered it three months ago and then forgot it. And yesterday old Hadley dug it out from the back shelves and shoved it off on me. I've forgotten what I wanted it for. There's waste for you. And that's only a sample. Same everywhere. What we need is efficiency."

"What's that?"

"Being efficient—using your brains to save your heels. What we need is a coöp store—of the people, by the people and for the people. It's a fact that the average European family lives on what the American family wastes."

"So that's it," commented the irreverent Cameron. "I've always wondered where the garbage scows go after they pass the Narrows."

Graves ignored the interruption. "There's too much waste, too much running around in circles. We need short cuts, simplification, cutting out of details."

Langdon removed his pipe. "How?" he asked, and im-

mediately sealed the aperture again.

"Short cuts, I said," repeated Graves. "For example, in getting this book old Hadley had to write to a New York house. They sent an ambassador to the publishers. The publishers shipped an envoy to Italy to look up Machiavelli's descendants and get their opinion on the matter. And finally I got the book. That may not have been the exact procedure, but they had time enough to go through some such rigmarole. The same with everything; middlemen until you can't stir without falling over one and paying him for being in the way. They should be Done Away With—absolutely."

"How?" exploded Langdon again.

"Oh, damn!" said Graves, pinned down. "Buy direct—cut corners—simplify. Don't ask me for details."

"Organization," volunteered some lucid soul.

"It doesn't work," I interjected. My own painful ex-

perience along cooperative lines recurred to me.

"Et tu, Brute?" Graves contemplated me sadly, then, with a covert grin, clacked away again on his typewriter. To start a discussion and then abandon it to its fate was a favorite trick of his.

"Why can't it be done?" queried Langdon, persistent

seeker after light.

"I've tried it," I said, and told my experience in trying to convert Frank Patch and old Mr. Adams to the doctrines of coöperation. As I remember it, I elaborated my theories to some length, adding frills and details to enlarge the plan beyond a mere country grocery affair. I proved that Graves's idea was well founded—in theory—and then pulled the props from under his structure by reciting my own failure.

"But why?" persisted Langdon.

"Because these old duffers were hide-bound."

"Not at all. You attacked it in the wrong manner. Now my idea-" and Langdon preëmpted my plan, stripped it to a bare framework and skillfully built it up anew. He quoted authorities-mostly Russians and Germans with elusive names—and cited statistics which I suspect were manufactured for the occasion. Men offered suggestions: I myself discovered new possibilities and aided in collaboration. Out of the riot of deep voices and shrill voices, each trying to ride down the others and make itself heard—and with Cameron conducting a Delphic chorus of derision from the couch corner—we evolved a most wonderful creation. The exact details escape me, but it is my impression that the foundation of the structure was a test case and a Supreme Court decision. The Supreme Court, next to ourselves, was the most enlightened body in the country. There was to be a Central Purchasing Bureau, I remember; a Board of Statistics; a body having something to do with raw materials; a distribution committee—we would, of course, take over the railroads—and an infinite number of minor boards and committees regulating production and distribution. As we planned, I wrested the speakership from Langdon and was very dictatorial. It was all very beautiful-and all very absurd, as we knew.

"And if any one objects?" inquired Graves sardonically, as we added the last pinnacles and minarets to our structure.

"There'll be objection, surely," admitted Langdon. "Great objections from the hoi-polloi, politicians, speculators and conservatives in general. But shricking blue bloody murder is their long suit. Which class are you in?"

"Far be it," responded Graves. "But I'm afraid that your reforms are a bit too sweeping, too sudden. Not that they're not needed, for they are. But how will you do all this?"

"It'll take time," said some one.

"A small matter of a thousand years," scoffed Graves. "I suggested efficiency. And you idiots take the bit in your teeth and run wild on reform. Efficiency, as I see it, includes the gagging and binding of those who let their mouths run for the pleasure of hearing the drip and gurgle. In my opinion you're a lot of unregenerate Socialists. The present plan is all right, considering the limitation of being the product of human beings. All it needs is refining, not a new plan. And especially not such a half baked one as you've cooked up."

"What is the present plan?" challenged Cameron.

Graves was silent.

"Is there one?"

"There isn't," said Graves. "But has there ever been? And will there ever be? We've lived in a planned life so far, with everything mapped out for us; such and such courses to take with so much credit for each. That isn't the world by a long shot. Some of us are going to plug our heads off and get flunked after all; others will take snap courses and make Phi Beta Kappa without trying. There's no race of supermen to plan and order the world at large—except, of course, Coffin and Langdon."

"Education," offered a voice from the corner.

Graves shook his head. "We've spent eighteen years, on the average, in getting an education. And are we supermen? I think not."

"I'm hanged if you are, anyway," said Cameron brutally.

V

Whether the talk drifted off into educational matters or ended in a rough-house between Graves and Cameron I can't remember. I think it very likely that we ultimately wound up in a free for all debate on religion. All subjects seemed ultimately to lead to that end. Graves

always succeeded in switching the discussion to that inexhaustible field; "Just as in the case of religion," he would say, and then draw his analogy. Trouble always followed. Graves still remains the only theological crank of my acquaintances; extremes of religion or of irreligion are rare in these days.

His extreme was that of irreligion. Graves posed as a blatant atheist, but to this day I'm not sure how far he was really convinced in that direction. I know that at one time or another he impressed some part of his per-

sonal convictions on all of us.

"See here," I remember him saying, in answer to some particularly steadfast clinger to the faith of his fathers, "see here, religion isn't a matter of inheritance. It isn't belief in the gates of pearl or the resurrection of the dead. It's nothing more than right living according to the best standards known. Belief and protestation of belief don't enter into religion as I see it; it's a matter of works and not words. Put your trust in a superior being if you want to; if you can, you're lucky. I can't. I'd be happier if I could and I know it. But I can't and that settles it."

"I think that I'm a better man for believing," asserted

his antagonist.

"I don't doubt it," answered Graves, "and I think that I'm a better man for not believing. Your way is yours and mine is mine. There's no absolute standard of right living, any more than there's an absolute standard of gold value. It fluctuates, you know; the sort of life that would carry you to Heaven six centuries ago would get you life imprisonment now. A man who sins while knowing better isn't the same as a sinner who sins thinking it the right thing to do. And avoidance of sin is nothing more than a prophylactic measure, anyway."

"You admit that the standards of Christianity are the

best," accused the believer.

"Yes—the standards. But I regard them as the sum of human wisdom, not the edicts of a superior being. And

I'm none the worse for it—save that if I believed blindly I'd not be wasting my time enlightening you. By the way, have you any doubts?"

"In what?"

"That God spake unto Moses and all that. You believe implicitly?"

"Yes."

"Not a small doubt-way down deep?"

The steadfast one shook his head obstinately.

"It's my opinion that you're a liar," concluded Graves.
"If you're telling the truth your education has been wasted. The man who hasn't a doubt about anything isn't educated and angels will never perch on his pillow."

And Graves added another lifelong enemy to his list. This subject of religion gave me a good deal of trouble before I realized that there was no absolute solution. Graves robbed me of whatever belief I had held in the infallibility of Holy Writ and not until I had threshed out some sort of solution for myself did I let the matter drop. Finally I fell back on the religion of my father—that the soul is a manifestation of energy and therefore imperishable, and that Christianity—Graves had a hand here—is as good a rule for right living as the mind of man can conceive. That was my doctrine then; it is now. I feel that there is something beyond this life; I hope there is. What it is I cannot define, nor have I any desire to inquire into it too narrowly. With Omar, I believe that "I myself am Heaven and Hell"; let others build what visions of the after-life they please—for they are only visions, after all-I envy them their belief but cannot share it.

I wonder if college men to-day talk of these things? I think they do; I know that although we thought that "we were the first that ever burst into that silent sea" of discovery, the men who had gone before us had gone through this process of shifting and rearranging of ideas and I suppose the same holds true of the men who came after us. Methods of education may change, but the men who

were in their early twenties then had the same doubts and hopes as the college men of to-day.

Some men never did and never would think of these things, but in general our attitude toward them was the attitude of the majority of the men about us, each one of us discovering and solving after his own fashion. One manifestation of this unrest was an irreligious revival which occurred that spring; a series of impromptu Salvation Army meetings, consisting chiefly of red fire, pounding on a decrepit bass drum and the relation of burlesque conversions to the "worship of the Lamb." . . . "Three years ago I was in the gutter; now look at me." You know the sort. . . Perhaps it was nothing more than a means of blowing off steam, but I think that the roots of it went deeper than that.

#### V

During all this time I was digging deeper and deeper into modern languages, that part of the curriculum which came easiest to me. Somewhere along the road the idea of teaching as a profession came to me. Just what led to this crystallization of my ambitions I don't know; perhaps it was my growing intimacy with the professors and instructors in that department, for one of my great discoveries during these last two years had been that a man could teach and still be human. I became especially intimate with Estey, the head of the French department, and his tales of student days in Paris and Italy fired my imagination and made me want to fall in with this life.

"You have a good foundation in grammar, Coffin," he said to me one night, "a very good foundation. A summer in France, with a trip to Italy—Florence, I'd recommend, for they speak the purest there—and you will be better fitted to teach than most of the instructors we have here. A year abroad would be better, but you could get a fair idea of pronunciation and idiom in three

months. Then in succeeding summers—unless you marry, and you won't have money enough for that—you can go back and get more of it. But don't live in hotels, as you value your soul; get down among the peasant classes."

He chuckled and wagged his head reminiscently.

"I landed in Florence—from Pisa—with three lire. I sold matches in the street and lived on *polenta* until my cheque came through from home. And then, d'you know, I didn't cash it for a week. Fact. I liked living that way."

That was romance! Being broke at home wasn't much fun, as I already knew, but to be penniless four thousand miles from home, to sell matches and live on *polenta*—ah! That was indeed something to look forward to.

During senior year I made up my mind to follow Estey's advice; to spend a summer abroad and then come back to teach. I had come to like this academic atmosphere and I wanted to stay in it; it was leisurely, but constructive, outside the main current of affairs, perhaps, but all the better for this isolation. I can remember no positive distaste on my part for business and life outside of college; my choice was no more a choice than had been my interest in languages. It was again a matter of drifting into the easiest and most convenient course, rather than a deliberate choice. The question of money failed to enter into my decision to the slightest degree. I realized that teaching was a somewhat monastic form of getting a livelihood, but it was a pleasant one.

I planned a pleasant future for myself, as beautiful as one of those summer clouds we call "thunder-heads," towering into the sunlight above the dark and the rain below; a life above the storms in the clean atmosphere of the upper regions—and a life as unsubstantial as one of these same solid-seeming clouds. It needs but a slight shift in the wind to tear dreams of this sort to wisps and tatters of vapor and scatter them forever.

### VП

For some unfathomable reason there was an interim of a week between the last examination and Commencement; usually a week of deadly dullness, of undergrads leaving for vacation and graduates dribbling in for reunions and a general confusion and breaking up of the ordered course of the college year. The seniors either spent the week in dismal packing and disposing of the accumulated rubbish of four years or alternated between drunkenness and repentance. We were wiser. Cameron's father had a camp on a bit of a lake up north and at his invitation a dozen or so of us went up there, to return the night before Commencement. It was an interlude between undergraduate life and real life and was immensely good for us.

For a week we fished and tramped through the woods and came back to camp to feast royally on brook trout and play penny ante far into the night. Such minor matters as examinations and books and lectures fell away into the dim and distant past; we were through with such things forever and did our best to forget them. Cameron took advantage of his position as host and started a postmortem on a final paper in Greek and was ducked in the lake, with only one dissenting vote beside his own. Langdon held forth for burning him at the stake.

Langdon and I went fishing together on the last day of our stay, setting out after breakfast and covering more miles than I like to think of before turning back. Then Langdon insisted on fishing down stream, instead of striking out across country as any sensible mortal would. As a result it was after sunset when we dragged into camp.

We found Graves alone, the rest of the crowd having gone down the lake to the village. Good old Graves! He had mixed a great bowl of flapjack batter, with an unlimited supply of maple sirup and coffee on the side; we kept him over the stove until the spoon scraped the bottom of the bowl and we found difficulty in drawing a full breath. We wrangled about the number of fish we had caught, as we stuffed ourselves; Langdon, silly fool, made plans to go back in the morning and have a final try for a big fellow he had missed. Finally we threw the dishes in the half hogshead of water under the sink and went out on the porch overhanging the lake.

After the preliminary scrapings of chairs and demands for tobacco and flaring of matches, we were silent. It was quite dark by this time; just enough light remained to pick out the dim outlines of the hills to the west of the lake. Through a gap between two jagged hills was a more distant and higher peak, standing out in faint purple against their green-black duskiness. The waves, barely audible on the beach below us, came from an immense void; space had ceased to exist. There were no visible shore lines to the lake; we sat on the edge of unfathomable space.

Graves grunted inarticulately in appreciation; we smoked thoughtfully in reply. Somewhere along the lake shore a frog cleared his throat tentatively and was evidently satisfied that he was in good voice; a booming "Darrunk!" floated out and came back faintly from the invisible further shore. Again the frog announced his inebriety and for the third time. As though at the prompter's call there came the faint sound of voices from down the lake, a mere whisper at first, with only a bare thread of melody creeping in now and then. It was the crowd paddling back from the village. A murmuring medley of echoes beat in on us, flung back by the great pines across the lake and the bare hillsides above. Bit by bit the echoes grew as the main volume of sound approached; we made out scattering fragments of the tune; something about Clementina and a forty-niner and a detailed description of the lady's charms. Langdon hummed a wordless tenor, lost the air, puffed furiously at his pipe and relapsed into silence again.

"Young Indians!" drawled Graves softly.

Langdon grunted in acquiescence. A match flared as Graves relit his pipe; we saw his face outlined against the silken dusk for a moment and heard the complaining squeak of his chair as he settled back.

"I wonder . . ." he said thoughtfully, and stopped.

"Wonder what?"

"Nothing. I was just wondering whether Tommy and Moose and Peachpie and the rest of the crowd out there will feel like singing a year from now."

"Why shouldn't they?"

"I don't know. I was just wondering." He smoked silently. "I think we're all wondering just a little," he went on. "Just what are we going up against? We have — what was it that musty old duffer said in chapel last Sunday?—'these young men who have achieved the standard, O Lord,' or words to that effect. But what standard? I suppose we're finished products, all but the label. So much Latin and such a percentage of science; a dash of history, a trace of economics—and about fifty per cent of undetermined material. Is there a standard? That's what puzzles me. And if there is one, what is it?"

"Certified oyster shuckers," I suggested.

He paused a moment and then disentangled my meaning. "The world is mine oyster,' you mean? But is it? And will we find pearls or open oysters for others all our lives?"

"That's up to us."

"I suppose so," Graves assented gloomily. "But there ought to be some certainty about a standard. We ought to be sure."

"That's part of the game," observed Langdon, "and the best part. I know that I'll get a sheepskin to-morrow, unless they rake up some of my past misdeeds, and the next day I know that I'm going home. After that, I haven't a plan in the world. I have a vague idea that some day I'll get married and some other day I'll die; those things seem to happen to most people. I

may even have to work for a living. I'm not worrying."

"I envy you," said Graves.

"I envy you," retorted Langdon. "You two are standardized and I'm not. You may not know it, but you are. You have ideals; you look ahead; you have provided for I haven't. Coffin is going abroad, to drink the future. absinthe under pink and white awnings along the Boul' Mich' and try his voice in the Blue Grotto at Capri; he'll come back with baggy pants and a mosquito netting necktie to teach freshmen their avoirs and êtres. He knows what he's going to be at thirty and at forty and at sixty; we know what he'll be, too, and it's a wonder that we endure his presence as calmly as we do. The same with you, Graves. Next week you'll have a pair of overalls and a job in your father's grain elevator; you'll be trotting around with sweat in your eyes and dust in your throat and a vision of cornering the wheat market in the back of your head. But you won't. In ten years you'll have a house on the west side of the tracks, with a Swede girl in the kitchen and the guest chamber turned into an overflow nursery. Your standardized feet are set on the standardized road of all good graduates. You will work, marry, keep out of jail if possible, send your sons back to follow in your footsteps and have your reward in a quarter page in the annual report under 'Necrology.' If you are very successful they will run a black border around it, with an old English initial; if you're only partially standardized you'll get nothing but plain type."

He paused, and sighed while Graves chuckled.

"Sometimes I feel the pull of the downward path myself," he concluded. "I'm afraid that I'm partially standardized myself. I haven't been successful in wasting all of these last four years."

"Neither have I," said Graves soberly. "I'm a better and a wiser man than I was four years ago, better and wiser than I'd be if I'd spent the four years in any other way, I think, although there's no telling. Four years ago the world consisted of football with a fringe of algebra and minor vexations. Two years ago I wanted to destroy everything and start over again clean; the world had gotten into a horrible mess somehow or other and that seemed the easiest way out. Now—any one can call me a fool and I'll agree with him. I've learned nothing save how little I know."

"Isn't that the standard?"

"The sum of all wisdom," murmured Langdon.

"It's the beginning of wisdom, at any rate," said Graves. "But what has given me that view? I'm changed; we're all changed. Why? It's something more than nor-

mal growth, but just what it is . . ."

"Catalysis," Langdon's voice came to us out of the shadows. "You know that process of making sulphuric acid? You mix your sulphur dioxide—and stinking stuff it is, too-mix it with air in the presence of platinum and run it into water—result, pure sulphuric. And this is the point—you get your platinum back unchanged. Just how or why it does the work we don't know. I don't know, anyway. There are lots of things I don't know. But I do know that the process won't go on without it. Just the same with college; bring your ideas and men in contact with college as a witness and you get something which may or may not be pure but which is surely stronger than the ordinary run of human chemistry. Why? That's another of the things I don't know. I'm no better than the average man because I know Catullus and Goethe and Marlowe; any fool can study them and lots of fools do. I haven't grown through reading books and sleeping through lectures. College has been the catalyst in my life and in Coffin's and in yours; it has changed us without being changed itself. It's not the stuff we've studied; hang that and the sooner we forget it the better for us. But we have come to appreciate that there's something in life beside mere body needs and satisfactions; somthing beyond, always something beyond whatever narrow circle we happen to drift into after to-morrow. We are shut off forever from intolerance and narrowness and impatience with others; we've gone through that and come out beyond, into something broader and bigger. We've gone up on the heights and seen the world; after to-morrow we go down into it. But we can't forget that we've seen the whole—or enough of the whole to give us some idea of the illimitable field of human life and thought. That's what our catalyst has done to our raw material—nothing more than keep our minds open during the period during which crystallization usually occurs."

He leaned forward and tapped a hissing shower of sparks into the lake below. "I'd like to write one more editorial for the old paper to that effect," he said regretfully.

"I think that you're right," agreed Graves, picking up a minor point. "A good deal of this pessimism of ours, this picking things apart, has been just a pose with us. Not a pose, exactly, but a necessary stage of development which we got through as soon as we could." Langdon made noises of assent. "But it's been good for us; we've had glimpses of the wheels going 'round which we could have got in no other way."

The canoes with their freight of singers were nearer now, just rounding the point which had blanketed the sound of their voices. We caught fragments of conversation; some one raised his voice in envy of Hal Brown's "mash" on the damsel at the post office. Hal answered with a splash of his paddle; we saw the faint phosphorescent gleam of spray and heard the howls of remonstrance which followed. They struck off into song again and we listened in vast satisfaction.

"You see," said Graves, becoming articulate in the midst of some train of thought, "there are so many new things in the world that some of them are sure to be misused. You've got to try a thing out before you can see

the faults in it. And this century has been one of trial and experiment. We're children with a lot of new toys—steam and electricity and germ theories and all that. It's a second Elizabethan age; discovering new possibilities in familiar things instead of discovering new lands. And discoverers can't be expected to stop and patch things up."

"Progress, progress everywhere and not a stop to

think," Langdon cut in.

"Perhaps. We've been stopping to think for four years and I'm afraid that we're a little outside the main current. We're prepared to enter it, in one way, and damnably unprepared in another. As though Coff were to set out for Europe with a clean pair of socks and a trunk full of Baedekers. . . . I wonder. Have we been learning to appreciate scenery when we should have been toughening our feet?"

"We'll toughen up," I assented confidently. "And you can forget blisters and aches sometimes if you can see

something beside the road under your feet."

Graves sniffed rather doubtfully, but I think that Lang-

don agreed with me.

The canoes were nearly abreast of the camp by this time, three faint outlines suspended in the darkness. We heard the careless plunk and drip of paddles as they drifted slowly along. Some one in the nearest craft reached the nub of a story and was rewarded by a thin spurt of laughter. There is always one man in every crowd who tells that kind of story at inopportune moments.

"And that reminds me of another," he was encouraged to say. "There was an Irishman—"

"Aw, save it for to-morrow," came a drawling voice out of the dimness.

He saved it.

There was silence for a moment. Then Bones Joy, far out in the most distant canoe, started that old, old song

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of inquiry; started softly at first and carrying the air, then switching to a clear tenor as other voices joined in with him.

"Where, oh where are the grass-green freshmen?" he sang, and the brisk staccato march of the tune set our

feet swinging.

"Safe at last in the sophomore class," they concluded. The second boat took up the tune and carried it on one more year. More briskly still came information regard-

ing the drunken juniors from the third canoe.

There was a pause following the disposition of our traditional enemies; then, before the others could start the fourth verse Graves rose to his feet, pulling up Langdon and myself on either side of him. He started the slow, steady chant of the final section; Langdon joined in with a soaring tenor and I made shift with an uncertain bass which made up in volume what it lacked in tonal quality. The wall of the camp behind us threw our voices out over the dusky lake; perhaps it was surprise which held the canoes silent; perhaps it was appreciation. I know that as we marched slowly along with the thrice repeated inquiry the spirit of it got hold of us; it was something more than a student song with its roots reaching back to God knows where. It was an expression of faith.

"Where, oh where are the grand old seniors? Safe at last in the wide, wide world."

"All in!" bellowed Graves, breaking the silence which hung over the last strains of our trio. He waved as though leading an invisible orchestra; the canoes swung off into the requiem which has been sung over immemorial classes.

> "They've gone out from their Alma Mater, They've gone out from their Alma Mater, They've gone out from their Alma Mater, Safe at last in the wide, wide world."

### FLOOD TIDE

"Wide world!" repeated the echoes from the further shore.

"And by God, we are!" said Graves—and there was a huskiness in his voice caused by something beside singing. Langdon coughed dryly, and I—well, I sniffled and was grateful for the darkness.

Then the canoes came in with a rush. We hauled them out and built a great fire on the beach, and talked and smoked and baked ourselves far into the night, until Bones Joy fell asleep and nearly rolled into the fire. Then we broke up and went to bed, casting the glowing brands of the fire far out over the lake, wheeling and trailing glowing arcs of sparks across the sky and finally hissing to darkness in the water.

# CHAPTER THE FIFTH

1

I HAD planned to sail from Boston early in July, but I stayed home for a while at my father's request.

"Wait over another boat, son," he had said. "I haven't

seen much of you for a year, you know."

I stayed willingly, although down deep in my heart I regretted the loss of a week. My father was more silent than ever during this week; he was always rather taciturn and I was so wrapped up in the summer ahead of me that I failed to notice anything out of the way. I remember feeling hurt when he failed to respond to my enthusiastic plans; he merely listened and said nothing. One evening toward the end of the week, as we sat together in the living room, I found out what he thought. He had been silent ever since supper, puffing away at his pipe and glancing aslant at me as I frowned over an ancient French timetable—a relic of the days when my ambitions had turned toward railroading. Finally he hitched his chair around to face me.

"Put by your book for a while, will you?" he asked. "I want to talk to you."

I wondered what was coming, as I folded the ragged sheets of the timetable; perhaps some fatherly advice on the perils of Paris.

"I want you to stay home this summer," he said quietly. I was silent, fumbling about in my mind for something

to say. Then a wave of senseless and childish disappointment swept over me.

"Very well, sir, if you think I can't be trusted," I said stumblingly.

"It's not that at all, son," he answered. "Perhaps I should have gone at this some other way, but I'm no good at beating around the bush. I've been thinking matters over for a week and that's my conclusion. I want you to stay home this summer. Will you?"

"You're the boss," I said stiffly. "It's your money." The faint shadow of a smile lurked about his eyes.

"Don't look at it that way; you don't owe me anything. I've done no more for you than I should, and—well, it's been as much fun for me as it has for you. It's not a question of money, or of my being boss, but something else.

"Let me make you my proposition," he went on, "and then perhaps we can talk it over without your looking so down in the mouth. I don't know the first thing about this teaching game, beyond what you've told me. But I've been thinking it over for quite a while and the only conclusion that I can arrive at is that it's a deuce of a poor way of getting a living. I may be wrong, and if I am wrong I want you to show me. That's the way I look at it now. I want you to think it over for yourself between now and September and if you still think well of it at that time I stand ready to finance a year abroad for you. You can't do much in three months over there, as you say."

Good, I thought; a year was better than three months, much better. As for changing my mind—nonsense.

"Is it a bargain?" he asked.

"It is, dad, and I'm grateful to you for the chance."
"All right, then." He leaned back with a sigh of relief. "I'm glad that you see it that way. D'you know, I've been a bit afraid of you since you came home with those glasses; I feel that you know so much more than I do."

I laughed rather shamefacedly as I took off the glasses. "I don't really need them; they're more for the looks of the thing than to help my eyes," I answered. "And as for knowing more than you—Cap'n Billy says that 'a

man never gets so strong that he can lick his father,' and he's right."

He chuckled, and filled his pipe again from the brown bowl.

"Glad you think so highly of me. Now that you know what I think of this teaching idea of yours we can talk it over sensibly. How much would you get the first year?"

"Eight or nine hundred," I answered. "I think the

average is about that."

"Not bad; not bad at all. About what the average college graduate starts on, I imagine—perhaps a little better than the average. And after that? The older men get more than that, I suppose."

"I think that they run between twenty-five hundred and three thousand, although I'm not sure. Some of them get more—heads of departments, for instance—but I think that holds good for most of them."

"Old men, aren't they? That is, they've been teaching

for fifteen or twenty years?"

Most of them were about forty-five, I thought. I checked them off; Estey, Barnes, Hawes, Burton; yes, they were all over that age.

My father shook his head with the air of one whose suspicions are confirmed. "Doesn't it seem to you that they're getting a mighty small return for their labor? I know that they seem to have an easy time, a few hours a day for nine or ten months of the year. That isn't the question, of course. You're not looking for an easy time. But they've poured their whole lives into teaching and it seems to me that they ought to get more out of it. And if they were business men they could sell out and retire when they get along in years. But do they? I think not; they've got nothing to sell out, and unless they've been mighty careful and saving they have to stay in harness until they drop."

I said something about "commercial attitude."

"Few men work for the fun of it; you've got to look at that side of the question. I'm not looking at that side alone, but it's one of the things you've got to consider. What I object to most is working for some one else all your life. You were telling me about a man named Reynolds the other day; what about him? Good man, wasn't he?"

"One of the brightest men on the faculty."

"Well liked among the fellows?"

"You're right he was," I said warmly. "They had to club men to keep them out of his courses."

"But still they fired him."

"Those old fossils on the Ad Committee were afraid of him because he knew too much. He criticized and said what he thought—and then they let him go on a trumped-up excuse."

"That's a rather sweeping indictment of college authority," said my father. "Of course you're willing and prepared to knuckle under and keep your mouth shut when you're an instructor? Seems to me it's either that or

be fired, like Revnolds."

I hadn't considered that. I had liked Reynolds, as every one did; most certainly, had I been in his shoes, I should have acted as he did, spoken my mind freely, done as I pleased—provided my classes were well conducted—and probably been fired, as he had been. I remembered that Estey had told me that one of the charges brought up against Reynolds was that he had lowered the academic standard by wearing a soft shirt in classes. I saw all this in a new light, and it troubled me.

"That's one of the things I want you to think over," observed my father, as I sat silent. "You'll have to sacrifice a good many of your ideals whatever you do, whether you teach or go into business. That's only one thing you'll have to give up if you go into teaching—this right of thinking and saying what you please. Always a sub-

ordinate and never your own master."

"Yes, perhaps I would," I answered thoughtfully. "I hadn't looked at it in that light before." Already my father's shafts were finding the weak places in my armor. "But if I don't teach all my study will be wasted. Estey says——"

I stopped; to tell the truth, I was afraid to go on. I

had never seen my father angry before.

"The sooner you get this idea of 'Estey says' out of your head the better for you," he said with a new note in his voice. "I have no doubt but he's a good man, but he's not living your life for you. He may have a lot of fine theories of life, but they're just theories. And so have you; do you know anything about coal-mining, brokering, real estate, beyond that in theory they're dirty and commercial? That's it; everything outside of books is dirty and money-grabbing—in theory. By Heaven, I'd rather fish for a living, and be able to call my soul my own, than to have to knuckle down and say things I don't believe and think things that I don't dare to say, just because some Administration Committee might think that I was radical and dangerous and a man to get rid of!"

He stopped abruptly, and knocked out the ashes of

his pipe.

"Hang it, I've lost my temper, a luxury I haven't permitted myself in years," he said. "But I mean it all. Estey and that crowd may seem broad-minded to you, perhaps they are, but like most broad things they're shallow; any man who sees nothing in the world beyond his immediate surroundings is shallow. As for your study being wasted—have you learned nothing but what you're planning to teach? I think you've got a few things outside of that."

"I think I have, too."

"I've said enough, I guess, to let you know how I look at these plans of yours; I've said more than I intended. Think it over; take all summer if you want. If you're of the same mind in the Fall, I've made my promise and I'll stick to it. If you really want to teach, want to with all your heart and soul, you'll do it anyway. But I don't think that you want it that way. It's up to you."

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After that it was my father who read and I who thought.

I cannot reconstruct that summer; I remember days when I was convinced that I was right following and succeeded by days when I thought that the whole world was wrong and that I as decidedly out of place in the general scheme of things. This was really the first time in my life that I had been called upon to decide things for myself; it was the parting of the ways and I found it very hard to make up my mind one way or the other. This choosing of one road or the other is a common experience; every man makes these decisions many times during his lifetime. But usually they are made easily, without thinking; only on looking back do we see that here or there we have unknowingly passed the cross roads. Decision is difficult when we sit down to think it over.

I went through this period of decision without asking help. Yet Elizabeth helped me, in a way. During the summer I realized that we had both changed. My own change was an accentuation of the romantic streak in my nature; her change was toward an almost harsh practicality. At times I caught in her a distant resemblance to Graves, minus his protean viewpoint but still pragmatic. Again, some opinion of hers reminded me of Dick. I began to distrust my loose and florid imagination as a disease, to wonder if it might not lead me from one vain imagining to another all my life.

Teaching, as a vocation, lost its appeal. Yet nothing came to take its place. In this period of indecision I wrote to Graves explaining my predicament; an absurd

letter bristling with French quotations and tag ends of second-hand philosophy. He replied, as I remember it, that going to work would be a damned good thing for me.

And, ultimately, I came to that decision myself.

I decided that my father was right and that Estev and I were wrong. As the summer passed, I gradually came over to my father's views of teaching and teachers; I saw that I had idealized these men and that there was another side of their lives beside the pleasant intellectual existence which had appealed to me. It was my first look into the future, unblinded by romance; I put myself in the place of Estev and considered what I would be at his age. Forty-five, fifty, perhaps, with a professorship if I was lucky-and what else? A few thousands saved, perhaps a house of my own; the consciousness of a life spent in clubbing grammar and literature into unresponsive young cubs, and old age coming on. Old age, and the constant fear of being supplanted by some younger man; either a constant, bitter struggle to keep abreast with the times, learning after the zest for learning had gone, or becoming out of date and behind the times. Struggling, not to increase my earning power, but to keep pace with the procession. I remembered the quaint mannerisms of the older professors; I had found amusement in them once, but I didn't now. I deliberately looked at the darker side to the exclusion of my former viewpoint; I dug into my mind for doubts which I had once dismissed without consideration. It was the idea of working for some one else all my life which finally decided me. I'm not sure, but I think it was the independence of the life that attracted me, and with that illusion stripped away the decision came easily.

Still I hesitated about telling my father. If I told him, the decision would be irrevocable; I wanted to keep the question open as long as possible. As a matter of

fact, Bess was the first one to know of this decision; after I told her there was no backing out.

I asked her to marry me.

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It came quite unexpectedly to both of us. All through college I had entertained a dim idea that some day I would marry Bess, if I married at all, but all summer the conviction had been growing upon me that life without her would be insupportable.

I had gone over to her house, one evening after finishing my work at the store, and found her in the garden behind the house; we sat under the trees in the gathering dusk, talked for a while and then fell silent. Then I asked her. I remember the clear outline of her profile against the darkening eastern sky as she plucked at the close cropped grass and wrinkled her brows in perplexity; I realized quite suddenly that she was a woman and no longer a schoolgirl. I felt immeasurably young and inexperienced; I was rich in nothing but possibilities; experienced in nothing at all; my only knowledge was that I knew nothing. But I had asked her, and I sat doggedly awaiting her answer.

"I don't know," she said slowly. "I've always thought

some day you and I---"

"Just what I've always thought," I said eagerly.

"But that isn't the only thing. You'll be abroad for a year and after that——"

"I'm not going, Bess; I've given that up."

She turned and looked at me, her lips parted in sur-

prise.

"You're the first one to know it. I'm going into business. I'm going to work at Hatherly's—the wholesale house, you know. Old Hatherly promised me a job once and I'm going to take him up."

She was still silent, adjusting herself to new conditions.

"Well?" I said, as courageously as I could.

I saw one eyebrow creep up in that dear one-sided smile and I knew my answer. She drew back and made a gesture for silence; we heard some one approaching around the corner of the house.

"Mother," she whispered. "Come."

Like two conspirators we crept around the house in the twilight; I heard Mrs. Alden calling behind us, but we reached the gate and the shelter of the hedge before she saw us.

We hesitated, and then turned toward the sea. We crossed the Square and struck into the road which led out between the silent houses to the Point. The noises and the lights of the town faded behind us; only we two and the stars and the quiet breathing of the sea as we went on. The road dwindled to a cart track, then to a mere path. I slipped my arm about Bess and she drew closer, her shoulder just under my arm. We were content.

But still. . . .

"I'm glad that you've given up your idea of teaching," she said presently. "There's not much money in that, is there?"

My father's own argument, and yet it seemed to grate on me, coming from her.

"You think that's why I've given it up?"

"Isn't it?"

"Partly," I admitted. "But I want to be my own boss; to say and think what I please."

"Oh, that!" she said, as though that was a very minor reason indeed. We looked at it differently, I thought. But Bess and I were at odds on so many things that I had come to accept it as the natural state of affairs. I was in love with Bess, not with her views of life.

"And Hatherly's?" she asked softly. "It's a big place?"

"Not too big for me."

"It's practical, at least," she decided.

I wonder. The thought struck me then, as it does now, that perhaps what I saw in Hatherly's was merely a chance for exercising my imagination in new lines, and not an opportunity for serious work.

"You must be practical," she criticized. "Imagining things doesn't get you anywhere. It hasn't got us very

much so far."

"I know." The last flicker of hope of her father's return from the Klondike had vanished that spring. "Let's not talk of that to-night."

"But----"

I swung her away from me and stood with both hands on her shoulders. "I'm a hard headed business man, with no trace of sentiment in my cosmos," I proclaimed. "I eat competitors alive. Men fear me. I bark short and snappy orders and everybody runs. Are you satisfied?"

"Satisfied," she nodded, half smiling and half serious.

We went on down the narrow path which twisted down between the ledges to the little cove at the tip of the Point. The warm sand crunched beneath our feet as we stopped. On the beach below us the waves whispered and hissed in the dimness, the slender threads of foam on their crests appearing mysteriously out of the blackness, flashing a moment, and then vanishing. From far away over the sea, as though from a low hung planet, came the gleam of the light on Great Head; flash, flash, a pause—then a longer glow and the light disappeared, pulsing off its number to the velvet sky and silken sea; the heartbeat of the sea, marking the passage of eternity. Beat, beat, pause; beat—and the steady stars shone alone. Night, the brooding expanse of quaker-gray sea—and Bess. God! to be young again!

Out of the darkness a darker shape materialized and

stole slowly along, some belated launch returning to harbor, the red glow of the port light rising and falling in slow rhythm. Suddenly the long beam of a searchlight shot out from the slow moving mass, a faintly outlined silver beam tipped with cold fire. It played about among the anchored craft as the launch crept in and lost headway, resting for a moment on some craft, outlining every shroud in pure white against the dusk, and then capriciously sweeping on to the next.

Then with a swoop the beam swung over to the Point, rested a moment, and then started swiftly toward us. Rocks and ledges sprang into being, deeper shadows appeared and disappeared as the light leaped along. It reached the end of the little cove and came on more steadily. It approached, bathed us for a moment in its white

radiance, and passed on.

As it passed in its careless search it left one impression which will be mine as long as I breathe—and after, if the dead smile over dear memories. I remember the clear silhouette of Bess's profile against the glare, framed in the golden nimbus of her hair. I remember the soft flowing lines of her dress, the rose in her hair, her check curved in a smile. I remember catching my breath involuntarily, as though I had touched on some mystery beyond all my knowledge.

With an almost audible click the light vanished and we were left in darkness, face to face with the eternal

mystery of the open sea.

# BOOK THE SECOND

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# CHAPTER THE FIRST

I

THERE was a tradition about the warehouse that Hatherly had once been seen without his hat, a tradition whose origin was lost in the mists of antiquity. Even old Jenkins, who had been with the house for over thirty years, failed to recall the origin of this myth. Winter and summer, in the office and in the warehouse, Hatherly and his flat topped derby were one and inseparable. Jim Chapman, the head teamster, declared that the "Old Man" wore it even in the barber's chair. But this was merely a theory, and Jim, although professing great disrespect for Hatherly always jumped with the rest of us when the hat came bobbing down the crowded aisles, preceded by Hatherly's raucous shout of "Er-r-r, boy!" We were all nameless, at Hatherly's; everybody was "boy"-pronounced, as nearly as I can render it, "bwey!" in one sharp explosive outburst. Add to this shout a triple chin, a pudgy chin and two sharp eyes set in a wilderness of fine wrinkles under the curled hat brim and you have Hatherly to the life.

He also had a queer stenographic manner of speech which was very difficult to follow.

"Er-r-r, boy!" he would say. "Order—Lawrence—gone yet?"

A rustle of pages, and Carr would say that it had left that morning.

"Right. Harrumph! Kick last time—slow—happen again."

And then, stepping to the door and squinting up, he would volunteer the information that it was "Funny

weather." Rain, snow or cloudless skies, it was always funny weather. Then, with the air of one with no time to waste on idle gossip, he would bob away again, the shout of "Bwey!" and the slam of the office door would float back to us and we would be safe from interruption for at least a quarter of an hour.

There were many times during that first year when I hated Hatherly's, the entire wholesale grocery trade, and all its connections with a deep and abiding hatred. didn't fit in. Worse still, I saw absolutely no chance of getting ahead. I came to Hatherly's a young-man-in-ahurry, feeling that I had dropped four years and resolved to recover my lost ground as soon as possible. But my progress was damnably slow. I wonder now, not at the slowness of my progress, but that Hatherly gave me the chance of getting ahead at all. I had many squabbles with the other clerks; I never did quite get in touch with them, even toward the last. I put myself on the defensive; to avoid seeming stupid I pretended alertness; I feigned complete understanding of muzzy explanations and directions when I grasped only outlying fragments of the idea. I made many mistakes; more than once the only way out of the maze seemed to chuck the entire affair and enlist in a pick and shovel brigade. I would go home to my stuffy little room over Beacon Hill convinced that I was an abject failure, resolved to give Hatherly a week's notice in the morning. And then, lying awake with a hot head, I would plan coups, imagine some extraordinary situation in which my efforts would save Hatherly from annihilation. But, just as Hatherly offered me a partnership, I would remember that I had sworn to be practical. And bump-bump-plop; my punctured balloon bounced down the rose-marble steps of romance and expired wheezily in the muddy gutter of fact. I went to sleep wondering whether the Old Man would fire me first thing in the morning or postpone the pleasurable slaughter until afternoon.

When matters became quite unendurable I walked over to Cambridge and wept on the neck of Bones Joy. He had been a frequenter of the old room in Franklin House, had graduated with me and was pursuing an elusive A. M. at Harvard. I usually came away comforted. Joy had troubles of his own. Another relaxation was visiting Luigi, the brown, car-ringed Italian who did odd jobs about the warehouse. We talked Italian-very stumbling Italian on my part and Tuscan of swift, bird-like swoops on Luigi's-and drank white wine in his sand-scrubbed room in a North Square four-decker. I was moved to make charcoal sketches of Luigi and Giulia and the two fat bambini-spoiling them, however, in applying the fixative—and was considered a gran signor indeed. on Sundays Luigi and I went to the old Art Museum in Copley Square and gesticulated eloquently over paintings and statuary. . . . This was far from living on polenta in Florence and bunking under a blue push cart adorned with purple roses, but it was at least a passable substi-

But gradually I was weaned from these romantic collegiate ambitions. One by one these dim, bookish abstractions which had been my horizon were blotted out by realities. I had but one ambition, to get married, but my chances seemed to recede as time advanced. Promotion failed to come; it loitered tantalizingly along the way, circled up slowly and coyly, and no amount of diligence on my part seemed to hasten its approach. As for marrying on the salary I was getting, that was unthinkable; Kendricks and Joy united to knock that out of my head.

Kendricks was the man next above me; he was only two years my senior but had already been at Hatherly's seven years, had a wife and two children and was the happiest and most self-satisfied mortal in seven states. He was a red faced, loud voiced man, one of these men who bustle about and make a great clatter over their work and don't do so much after all. During the lunch hour he would perch on a crate near the shipping room door, swinging his short legs while he swigged cold coffee from a bottle and speared sandwiches from his lunch bag; on such occasions he had a habit of holding forth in an amazingly frank manner on his home life in general and the benefits of matrimony in particular. I think that marriage had been the one great event in his life; he never tired of talking of it.

"Ought to try it, Coffin," he declaimed, waving the bottle. "Look at me. Bummed around lodging houses for five years before I met Maggie. Thin? Lord bless you, I've gained forty pounds since then. Always helling around; I was a wild young dog, I guess. There's nothing

like it. Makes a man of you."

The coffee bottle tilted toward the ceiling.

"Owe it all to her," he said with a hint of moisture about his eyes—perhaps some of the coffee went the wrong

way. "Come out and see us some time—any time."

I went home with him one night. Kendricks lived out in Somerville, and a long, tedious ride it was in the crowded electric; Kendricks went into a trance over the sporting sheet and took the conductor's number when we were carried two blocks past his street.

"Go chase yourself, you fat sleep walker," snorted the

conductor as the car shot on into the darkness.

"Damned impudence," fumed Kendricks. "Report him to-morrow, sure as shooting."

I made inarticulate noises of sympathy.

"Oh, well," he said more cheerfully, "we're home, anyway. Great neighborhood, this, Coffin. Like out in the country. Quiet. Only ten years ago it was all marsh here; now look at it, all built up. Down here three blocks is where I live."

It might have been like the country for all I know, inasmuch as he failed to state what particular sylvan glade it resembled. By this time I had become accustomed to this kind of suburb, but it impressed me that night as something hideously ugly. Row after row of three-deckers, all alike, alternated with partially bare house lots chastely decorated with bill-boards and tin cans. Quiet it certainly was not, save perhaps by comparison with Hatherly's; there was a ceaseless restless murmur of street cars and humanity, rising and falling but always audible. I glanced down at the little man trotting along beside me and wondered what he would think of Whitehaven's quiet elm-shaded streets. An impenetrable wilderness, probably, and the wide reaches of the marsh would seem to him as desolate as the vastness of interstellar space. I was conscious of a sudden feeling of whimsical respect for any one who could recognize his own home among all these.

I enjoyed that evening, despite my jaundiced view of this way of living. Mrs. Kendricks proved to be a cheerful young woman with a dress which was imperfectly hooked up the back; she presided over the supper table and abetted Kendricks in an obvious conspiracy to disguise the fact that there wasn't quite enough to go around. Evidently she had not expected company. After supper Kendricks showed me his stamp album while Mrs. Kendricks washed the dishes; later she brought in the two youngsters to bid us good-night.

"Hugh and Cry, I call them," chuckled Kendricks, as they smiled sleepily at us over their mother's shoulders.

The jest was new then.

Mrs. Kendricks sang for us after that, first protesting that she was dreadfully out of practice, a contention which she proved as she stumbled through a series of those sentimental ballads which were so prevalent just after the war with Spain. But she sang very well, in contrast to her performance on the piano; she sang in a low and pleasant alto voice, and when Kendricks discovered a tattered old book of songs which had stood the test of time I settled back and enjoyed it thoroughly. Kendricks

timidly discovered a voice and hummed a wordless accompaniment, not so much an accompaniment as a rich, deep volume of sound against which his wife's clearer tones stood out in silhouette. I thought of the closed piano in the parlor at Whitehaven; I wondered if my father and mother had ever sung like this in the evening, and altogether I felt more happily miserable than I had for a long time.

Toward ten o'clock the people in the flat above gave

evidences of appreciation.

"Let 'em pound," said Kendricks, and seemed disposed to ignore the applause. "They gave the kids some rotten fruit last week; serve 'em right to be kept awake. Get back at 'em. . . . Try this one, Maggie."

Mrs. Kendricks agreed with him, to all outward appearances, but I understood that she had to live in the same house with the people upstairs twenty-fours a day. I made a great pretense of horror at discovering the lateness of the hour; Kendricks urged me to stay—"Stay all night; we can put you up on the couch"—but I finally got away.

I find it difficult to account for my state of mind that night. At first I envied Kendricks. He was happy, satisfied, content with little things, perhaps, but still very content. His ambitions were fulfilled; he had a wife, a home, children and a job. What more could he want? Nothing.

I reached the car line as I came to this decision; a car came rumbling along; I ran a few steps after it and then stopped and let it pass. I dreaded going back to the stuffy little room in the lodging house. I crossed over and struck out into another side street.

As I went along, more than half envying Kendricks, I took up the thread again. He wanted nothing more—but myself? I realized that I was not Kendricks and never would be. I knew too much. I tried to imagine myself as content with his lot, tried to put myself in

his place and realized the impossibility of it. As Graves had said, I was one of those who had discovered something in life beyond small things, and once found it was impossible to forget. Happiness for Kendricks was quite another thing from happiness for Coffin. In Kendricks's place I would be eating my heart out with unfulfilled ambitions. I knew that there was something better, while Kendricks didn't. Perhaps he knew, perhaps he ignored the existence of something better, knowing that it was beyond his reach; perhaps he had known and forgotten. I couldn't admit that there was anything beyond my reach. I tried to imagine myself living as Kendricks did, and still keeping my ambitions. I failed in that; I knew myself too well.

Another consideration and a less selfish one forced itself upon me. I had some one to consider beside myself. Would Bess like this sort of existence? I thought not. Discontent stood out in her character like an underlined word: she was discontented with Whitehaven and she would scarcely be content to live sandwiched between two other families, economizing, denying herself, even for the wonderful privilege of welcoming me home every night. And even Kendricks's manner of living was beyond me; in point of dollars and cents he was my superior. might be beyond me for years; to date I had seen no indications of success. I was sure of nothing; least of all was I sure of my own ability to succeed. There is no despair so utterly hopeless as that of uncertain youth, and I found a gloomy pleasure in going to the bottom of the cup.

I must have wandered and thought for a long time, for it was nearly midnight when I turned out into Massachusetts Avenue and found the lights of Harvard Square ahead of me. On a sudden impulse I made a detour to pass the house where Bones Joy roomed; I felt a need of advice. I wanted to talk to some one; Bones was a

good deal of a fool in many things, but even poor counsel was better than none.

There was a light in his window, and I found him still at work despite the lateness of the hour, sweating and smoking and making notes over a big volume.

"Hello, Haroun-al-Coffin," he said in surprise. "How

fare the streets of Bagdad?"

"What do you know about marriage, Bonesy?" I asked abruptly.

"Never tried it."

"What do you think of it, I mean?"

He considered my question with some show of amusement. No doubt there was a trace of the ridiculous in calling on a man at midnight with such a query.

"As an institution, it has my approval," he concluded.

"It keeps people out of mischief."

"But seriously," I said impatiently.

He hesitated and tipped back his eye shade.

"I don't think of it," he said, and then repeated it in a changed voice. "I don't think of it. I don't dare to think of it."

"You mean---"

"We're all fools, you know; you and I and all of us—myself most of all. I'm twenty-four, as fit for marriage as I'll ever be, both mentally and biologically, and I don't dare to think of marriage. I've had my choice between an M. A. and a wife and I've chosen the M. A. Isn't that being a fool? It's like hunger, you know; if you think of food, you want it; if you don't think of it you—don't mind it so much. I have to keep the door locked on everything but study; marriage is one of the things that I've locked out. You've no idea how hard it is to keep the door shut—they beat on it till you can't think, sometimes. Are you up against the same problem?"

"Almost the same," I admitted. "But you must have some definite idea of it."

"I have. We all have a choice of three courses when we come out of college. We can marry then, and give hostages to fortune, we can contract with some girl to live in a state which is neither courtship nor marriage until it pleases the gods to smile on us—or we can forget it. There's no other way, beyond those three."

"I can't forget."

"Girl bothering you?" he asked sympathetically.

"Yes."

"Gone very far?"

"I'm engaged," I admitted.

"I can't advise you; I'm not fool enough for that. It's your own problem. You can marry now, and scrub along as best you can, or you can put it off until you're financially fit. It won't be pleasant, either way. Nor easy."

Joy failed to help me, save by reducing my problem to a clear statement. As I rode home I tried to think of some other way out and failed to find it. I had my choice of three courses—of two, for it was impossible to forget. To live like Kendricks was impossible; there was no course open but waiting.

It comes back to me now that one of the absurdities which Graves and Langdon and I had cooked up between us was a scheme for tagging people according to their characteristics. I remember that we decided on a "No Passing" sign for one of the instructors who was a notorious hard marker; another label was a "To Let" placard, to be stenciled on the forehead of a persistent flunker; still another was the "Il est defendu de cracher" which we sewed to the overalls of our Canuck janitor, who spluttered when he talked.

There was one sign which we failed to place—"Pity the Blind." I should have gone home with that sign hung about my neck. Pity the Blind.

But still—if we were all tagged as we should be, how many of us would wear those three words!

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For the rest of the week I lived in blank despair. I could imagine no future for myself save one filled with denial and failure and Kendricksism. As an added inducement to moroseness, in two days I received three wedding announcements from fellows I had known at college, three fat, stiff-enveloped insults. I went home on Sunday in a black mood of depression.

And Elizabeth laughed at me. "Don't be foolish," she said.

"Perhaps you think it would be fun to live in Ken-

dricks's way," I said bitterly.

"I don't," she answered. "And I won't live that way. And——" she hesitated endearingly—"I don't think that I'll have to."

The clouds lifted a little.

"But you're so silly," she went on. "You've been working only six months and all this because Hatherly hasn't taken you into partnership!"

"That's not it, Bess. I might stay there six years and

not get ahead."

"You might," she agreed. She thought for a moment. "But isn't it a good deal like college, after all? You used to tell me about taking up new courses—how you and your precious Jerry Graves would plot out the whole thing, get a good idea of the entire course and then pick up the details as you went along. Wouldn't that be a good idea at Hatherly's?"

"Perhaps," I conceded reluctantly. But I was loath to discard my pessimism. "I've a notion to try some-

thing else, though," I went on.

"Don't," she said sharply. "I've seen that---"

I understood that she referred to her father. "I'll hang on," I promised.

I came back to work still in the dumps. But Elizabeth had given me a new view of my apparent failure.

I began to work methodically instead of by blind inspiration. No Jew ever worked harder than I did during the months that followed-I say it in all seriousness, for I have good reason to respect the race. Where my work overlapped that of others I extended the boundaries; where I was isolated I tried to fill in the gaps and come in touch with all branches of the business. I developed orderly habits. I remember that I even went so far as to make out a weekly schedule with every hour accounted for. A sense of humor kept me from following it, however. I struck up a friendship with a clerk of my own age at Whiting's, a rival house, a man in almost the same fix as myself. We compared methods and means used in our two houses, criticized, weighed, and ultimately got a fairly clear idea of the whole business through our contrast. I began to read again, not the stuff I had read in college, but books on business procedure, salesmanship and technical stuff of that sort. The literature of business was in its infancy then, but such as it was I read all I could get my hands on. I dipped into accounting and succeeded in understanding enough of it to help me; I even read law for a time, until I realized that I was wasting my time. I really worked as hard then as I did during the later years of The Stores, although it was blind work and in many ways diffused and misdirected. And the queerest part of it was that I enjoyed it. Where it would end I had no idea, but I had a feeling that at least I was getting somewhere. I had begun to realize that results follow work instead of coming with it.

As ever, with knowledge came imagination. I had once dreamed over the Divina Commedia and Gautier's Voyage en Espagne; I now saw visions through the pages of the Business Guide and Boyd's Handbook of Calculations. I began to look ahead and search out possibilities, I began to theorize and carry things ahead into the future. I think that before this I had regarded the whole-

sale business solely as a means of making money; as I increased my knowledge I realized that imagination may find expression in terms of groceries as well as in distant lands, railroads and French literature.

I began to keep track of these theories of mine, setting them down in an old college notebook which I brought down from home, correlating and rearranging them and gradually weaving them together. I shall come back to this notebook later; it was the foundation of many things. Where before I had theorized and forgotten, I now dreamed and remembered. I found it a great help to reduce theories and questions to black and white.

I had dreams of another sort which defy reduction to black and white even now. I cannot tell you what I thought of Bess during this period. We all experience this intense formless desire. If you have not gone through it no words of mine can make it clear to you; if you have—and I put trust in that—you know, and nothing that I might say would make it more clear to you. I might go on for pages, and unless by some happy chance I touched upon some connection with your own experience you would be no wiser than before. It is as common as birth and death, and just as indescribable.

I thought of two things only, business and Bess, and at times it was a question which subject engrossed the greater part of my thoughts. Breakfast and dinner in the stuffy dining room of the boarding house gave me visions of another table with Bess across from me, instead of the wrinkled countenance of old Eames as he demonstrated the new patent hoist in Warehouse 3 with two spoons and a knife. Then the displays in the store windows—"Bess would like that," I would think, and squint at the price mark. Or perhaps she wouldn't like it. When a person is always present in the back of one's mind it takes very little to bring her to the front—a word caught from the passing crowd, or perhaps a couple

wandering together in the Common as you go home over Beacon Hill in the twilight.

IV

One memory which gives me trouble is the fact that my love for Bess was stronger when she was absent than when she was present. Absent, she was wholly desirable; present—I am afraid that at times I was almost indifferent.

Perhaps this was because we quarreled. We disagreed inevitably; I try to recall a single trip home during which we failed to squabble over something or other and I fail in the attempt. I try to remember why we quarreled and fail in that also. I always went home gladly, in a fine fever of anticipation; I always came back bewildered and angry, wondering why we found it so impossible to agree and never solving the question. In time I came to accept it as the natural state of affairs, but I was always somewhat hurt and bewildered and puzzled. I never put my finger on the real cause of our many quarrels, I never went deep enough for that.

These quarrels seem pitifully childish as I look back on them. We fought over the smallest things. We were never in the same mood. Sometimes I came home in a mood of expansive futurism; "Oh, that!" she would say as I propounded some new scheme. "I thought you'd forgotten that weeks ago." Or she would listen in a half-hearted way and then retail some petty town gossip instead of commenting on my plans. Then I would sulk. Usually I sulked and she flared up. If I criticized, my taste was derided. An innocent but unfortunate remark of mine about an old bicycle which she had acquired led to one of our more serious quarrels. No doubt I was very clumsy at times. My explanations only made matters worse; "I'm sorry that I don't please you," she would say, and after a time I tired of explaining that she did

please me. Sometimes I suspect that she quarreled from sheer nervousness. They were all petty differences, but little things can be most damnably irritating.

I say that I cannot remember the causes of these quarrels. I can remember the cause of one, and I'm not sure that it wasn't the cause of more than one. I worried

over it then; I am still faintly puzzled by it.

I am puzzled because even now I am not sure how large a part the cause of it should play in this story. I begin to appreciate that I have been selfish all my life; perhaps I am pursuing my usual policy in filling the double rôle of hero and villain. . . . But what mistakes I have made have been my own fault. As I plan it, Learoyd is a sort of subsidiary villain; he appears, accomplishes his fell purpose, and then disappears. Even the accompaniment of shivery music is denied him. Assuredly I am selfish.

I remember that I had wanted to go driving that Sunday afternoon. Bess had objected; it was too hot and dusty. I had suggested that we borrow the Lily Lou and go sailing; she had objected to that and given no reason. There was only one method of locomotion left—that of walking.

"That's better than staying here," she agreed indiffer-

ently.

Our walk led us by devious ways to Coulter's wharf, the summer gathering place of the Fire Worshipers. It was quiet and pleasant here, despite a somewhat overpowering odor of fish, and we had the place to ourselves. On Sundays the captains and mates remained at home, swathed in the New England Sabbath and the unaccustomed glories of stiff shirts. Faintly across the harbor came a hum of conversation from the yacht club landing, with an occasional burst of laughter; counteracting and frowning upon this came the drone of a hymn from the Methodist chapel on Blake Street. We listened and talked intermittently. Bess amused herself by criticizing

my tastes in neckties; I wore a particularly vehement one that day, a combination of Scotch plaid and Italian sunset with purple thunderbolts as a minor motif. They don't make ties like that now. One of the lost arts, I

suppose.

Then, shattering the hush and startling the drowsing gulls into awkward, ungainly flappings, there came the puff and roar of escaping steam from the float before the club. One of the launches there sprang into life and stole off down the harbor, a slim, graceful shape with a glittering brass funnel above the gayly striped awning. We watched it idly as it slid slowly along, turned, and began to pick its way toward us down the harbor among the anchored craft, like a fine lady with skirts nipped between two fingers passing disdainfully among these bluntbowed and prosaic craft. In the bow was a figure in white duck; as the launch drew abreast of us and straightened out in the open channel the figure turned toward us and waved one arm in greeting. Bess waved in answer. long buff shape swerved in hesitation, as though to circle about to the wharf, then straightened out again; there was a louder burst of steam, a blacker cloud poured from the funnel, and she gathered speed suddenly, settling down on her stern and building up a steady arch of spray on either side of the bow.

"Isn't she a beauty?" asked Bess.

"Indeed she is," I agreed. "But it's not good form to wave at strangers—when I'm around."

"I don't," she denied. "He's not a stranger."

"A friend of yours, then?"

"Phil Learoyd. You know I don't wave at strangers."

"I don't know him," I said shortly.

"But I do. He's Mr. Bradford's nephew," she explained with equal shortness. Then her tone changed. "You ought to have a boat like that."

"On twelve a week? He probably pays his fireman more than that. But there are lots of things I ought to

have; unfortunately I have to earn them." Surely the devil was in me. "She's quite an improvement on the old Shadow—or the Lily Lou, for that matter."

"Oh, stuff!" she exclaimed inelegantly. "You always

twist my meaning."

"I'm a poor interpreter, I know."

Bess displayed storm signals. "I hope you don't think-"

"Did I say anything?" I defended, knowing very well that I had.

"You insinuated."

"Don't be so sensitive, Bess."

She sniffed and was silent.

I was curious. "I don't seem to place this—what was his name? Learoyd? Funny name; can't say that I like it. Have you known him very long?"

"I must start a diary," she said dryly. "Then I can submit it to you every Sunday. It will save you lots of

worry."

"But Learoyd-" I persisted.

"You seem very interested," she commented with assumed indifference. "He invited Joan Hamilton and me to go out with him this afternoon, if you must know."

"You should have mentioned it before. I could have gone back to town as well as not this afternoon, you

know."

"I wish you had. But you see I couldn't very well ask

you to go."

I had the grace to remain silent. What a devil of an old world it was! A fellow worked all week, slaved and sat up until midnight planning—and then came home to stage a cat and dog act with the best girl in the world. I gazed morosely out over the harbor and wondered if life was worth living after all.

"Well, why don't you go?" Bess asked. "It's not too late." But she smiled as she said it, and the sun shone again.

"You know why I don't go," I answered. "I can't. Let's forget it, Bess."

"Forgotten it is, then," she said readily. "I like to fight with you because you get so red. Now Phil never fights."

"Oh, confound Phil!" I made a mental bet that I could lick the tar out of Phil, and would, if I heard much more of him.

The waves raised by the passage of the launch had just reached us, slapping and gurgling among the piles below and causing the masts of the anchored fleet to trace slow arches against the sky; in so short a time had the little tempest raised by her passage raged and fallen calm again.

Learoyd and I met soon after that and failed to come to blows. He was a slightly built chap, not any too good looking, but with a ready smile which disarmed my nascent antagonism. He was a sort of protégé of his uncle's—hence the launch—and when I learned that he was working in a Boston banking house for two-thirds of my own salary the last shreds of my suspicion vanished. The only thing to his discredit was the fact that he was a Harvard man. . . .

I liked Learoyd, although undoubtedly I shouldn't have.

Perhaps you fail to understand the real cause of trouble between Bess and myself. You may expect a personal villain, as folks once believed in a personal devil, hoof, horns, tail and all. I believe in an impersonal devil, and the impersonal devil in this case was my own imagination, not Learovd.

You see, Bess and I were alike in many characteristics, and yet strangely unlike in the same things. We were both dreamers, in common with all youth. I owe much of the growth of my imagination to my father's influence; I think the same holds true of Bess.

There the resemblance ends—abruptly. Bess had been disillusioned. Her father had dreamed dreams and seen

visions and his life from first to last had been an abortive effort to bring his vision to reality. Through his failure Bess had come to distrust all dreams, to exalt practicality and regard imagination as a sign of weakness. It was a logical and inevitable conclusion. I have no way of determining her definition of success at this time, save that it must have been diametrically opposed to my own definition. I saw failure as the grasping of present and material ends; failure meant the denial of the future—and, by corollary, success was the denial of to-day for the possibilities of to-morrow.

In contrast to Bess, I had known no disillusion. Bess had come to demand practical results; I was still content with possibilities—which I called inevitabilities. These creations of my mind would inevitably come into being with time. Bess had seen an endless succession of her father's sawdust-stuffed kings and queens stripped of their finery and consigned to the ashbarrel, to be succeeded by other creations no more real, but possessing the beauty of novelty. She had seen the stage of imagination in its naked reality, with its pasteboard clouds and castles acknowledging their artificiality in the shameless light of failure. She was "half-sick of shadows," my own as well as those of others. I had the reality of work; she had nothing but the dissatisfaction of inaction.

I think that in a shadowy way I was aware of this difference even then. Bess was pleased when I settled down to work; I remember that I was more than a little puzzled by her sudden kindness and unwilling to admit that I knew the cause of it. It must have been this same partial appreciation which kept me from speaking of the futures which I had discovered in the wholesale business. I spoke of them, but spoke vaguely. I remember that I made the excuse that I wanted to surprise her.

My optimism and futurism must have been an ever present source of irritation to Bess. It was the cause of all these minor differences; they were smoothed over and ignored as soon as possible, but they left tiny shafts of discord sticking in our memories.

V

I had been at Hatherly's over a year before rumors of a change began to circulate about the place. Like most rumors, these were round-robin affairs; no one had started them, every one had heard the news from some one else, and every one had his own special brand of rumor. We were going to merge with the Kingsley Company; we were to sell out to a New York house; Hatherly was going to abandon the business, close up shop, and leave us all to scrub along as best we could.

"And then where'll we be?" queried Carr gloomily. "I tell you I'm not going to stay to find out." But inasmuch as Carr worked himself up to the point of giving notice every six weeks—and never did—his opinion was discounted.

Hatherly's actions gave some color of truth to these rumors. He made frequent trips to New York, to the vast interest of the lunch hour meetings in the boiler room. Carr became more dismally prophetic than ever, finally resigned, and was told not to make a dam' fool of himself. Kendricks, maddened by Carr's persistent insinuations, screwed up courage enough to ask Hatherly how things were in New York. He received the information that they had "funny weather" down there.

These vague rumors had other results beyond giving us something to talk about. A closer application to work became evident. Men who had made a point of showing independence by coming in at quarter past eight were now at their desks ahead of time; instead of skipping out ahead of time they dawdled during the afternoon and made a great parade of staying overtime. Hatherly was consulted frequently about minor matters, to his great annoyance. I suppose the idea was to attract his at-

tention to the unflagging zeal with which the work was being carried on; if there was a change coming that seeemd a certain way of securing promotion—or of avoiding being fired. Perhaps the latter was the real incentive.

Then Hatherly, as Carr expressed it, went "stark, staring, raving mad." He came back from a particularly long absence and shook up the entire establishment.

We were moved about from one department to another without apparent reason and with much resultant confusion. The old orderly progression of seniority was broken up, save in a few minor instances; Carr, who had been on the books for five years, threatened again to leave when he was transferred to the stock-keeper's desk; Kendricks went on the books and lost ten pounds before he got back to his old job again. The indignation meeting in the boiler room during the noon hour became anarchistic in tone.

I really enjoyed these frequent changes of employment. They made a welcome break in the monotony. before I had tried to understand the work of others from the outside I now had a chance to try it for myself. Thanks to my inquiries, I already had a fairly complete knowledge of these other jobs; when I went to a strange part of the warehouse I not only increased my knowledge of that particular part of the work but also tried to improve on what I found. I made changes to suit myself, simplified matters after my own ideas. Then, as the next shift came, I had to explain things to the man who followed me. I remember that when Gardiner came back to his old position of stockman on the second floor he first sighed in relief at getting back to something he understood and then bellowed in agony as he found his cherished methods supplanted by strange ones.

One of the things I put through was the printing of our minor quotations on return post cards, instead of the single cards which we had used before, a change which cut down the printer's bill appreciably. Hatherly discovered this.

"Who done this?" he queried, waving one of the cards. Blake, who happened to be nearest him, squinted at the offending pasteboard and jerked his thumb toward me.

"Coffin," he said dryly.
"So? This yours, boy?"

I admitted my guilt and handed him the printer's bills for the past two months. He stared at them, cleared his throat as he calculated the saving, and then grunted his approval.

"Good. But apt to mess 'em in tearing 'em," he quali-

fied. "Better use those big paper shears."

During this period of shifting he was alert for any change, eternally buzzing about from one part of the building to another, questioning, suggesting, criticizing, and explaining. Ultimately most of the older men got back to their original positions and stayed there, after having proved themselves hopelessly unable to grasp new conditions and strange requirements. But I still came to work every morning uncertain whether I would be sent out collecting or assigned to help Jenkins get out the statements.

Wherever I was sent I was sure of one thing. At some time of the day Hatherly would surely come around.

"How they coming now?" he would ask jerkily. "All right? Eh? Lessee what you're doing."

Sometimes he was pleased, more frequently he was not. I had many arguments with him.

### VI

These rumors persisted so long without proof that they were anything more than rumors that at last I lost all faith in them. If Hatherly had ever had anything in mind it had failed. I worked on as usual, carried on by inertia and received one advance in salary. This brought me almost into Kendricks's class. There were times when I saw the whole business of life in the darkest possible colors, but I had found work an antidote for these and they seldom lasted long.

I came to work one Monday morning in the midst of an unusually black cloud. I had been home over Sunday, and, as ever, Bess and I had quarreled over something or other, some petty little difference which was not important in itself but was enough to send me off out of tune with everything. I overslept that morning and wandered into Hatherly's an hour late; whether school kept or not was a matter of no moment to me. I had spent the preceding week in planning out a new method of keeping track of orders; Hatherly had looked it over on Saturday and condemned it because of the initial expenditure. I seemed doomed to go on without end, building up things for others to knock over, and ultimately ending where I had begun.

"The Old Man has been after your scalp this morning," said Sam Carr. "He's asked for you four times and more."

"Did he say what he wanted?" I asked without interest. Carr shook his head.

"No idea. Probably wants your advice on something." "Confounded old nuisance," I said, shedding my coat. "I may have to fire him after all."

Carr looked up with a grin and started to answer; his face changed suddenly and horribly. I turned, and found Hatherly behind me.

"Got here, did you?" he asked grimly. "Looking for you. Think you're working in a bank? Who's this you're going to fire?"

"My valet," I answered smoothly. "He didn't get me up on time this morning."

He glared at me for an awful moment. Carr went off

into a paroxysm of coughing which left him purple behind the ears.

"Humph!" he snorted finally. "Want to see you. Come

I marched away behind him; over my shoulder I caught a glimpse of Carr, looking after me with his mouth open -as though he had been caught midway in enunciating the word "Fired!" The others looked around as I passed behind them; only old Jenkins failed to take any interest in my passage. I felt remarkably like a victim led to slaughter, and at the same time I didn't care. Fired or not, it made no difference to me.

I felt less comfortable when the door of the inner office closed behind us. It was a big barn of a room, this inner sanctum, and I never felt quite at ease there. I stood shifting from foot to foot while Hatherly creaked to and fro in his swivel chair. I wished that he'd hurry and have it over with.

"Siddown," he said suddenly, and motioned me to a chair facing him. "Y'know, I've been watching your work lately."

I knew it. He fixed me with a shrewd and speculative eye; I made motions of answering and found my throat unexpectedly dry. But he decided to postpone the blow.

"General opinion is that I'm crazy, ain't it?" he said, with a wave toward the outer office. "Shifting you people around and making a hurrah's nest of the place? Huh? Well, I'm not; not by a long shot."

Before I could shift my helm to follow him he was off on another tack.

"You been New York, Coffin? Eh?"

"Once," I admitted, and by sheer hypnosis I dropped into his clipped fashion of speech. "Football gamethree years ago-stayed over one night."

"Know the place like a book, I suppose?"

I detected a humorous cast among the wrinkles about his eyes. Perhaps Carr had made a bad guess, after all.

"Hardly," I answered. "Not much chance to look around. Had a headache—from the car smoke."

He actually smiled. Then he frowned ferociously.

"I—er-r, the house has bought out Brown Brothers, down there. Ever hear of them?" he asked abruptly.

I admitted my ignorance and all thoughts of being fired

passed out of my mind.

"Thought not," he said, with a note of satisfaction. "Small house—old—dry rot. Didn't expect it, did you? Surprise you? Eh?"

"There's been a rumor-" I began.

"I know; can't keep 'em from talking," he said impatiently. "None of their business, but they know more about it than I do. How would you like to go down there?"

"You mean to take charge?" I asked, my head in a whirl.

He stared at me a moment.

"Not so fast, not so fast," he said. "That's Jenkins's job. You'll go with him—if you want to. Help him along—big job for one man. Jenkins is—pretty old, you know. Hide-bound. Good man, but slow. . . . Well?"

"Glad of the chance, sir," I managed to say.

"All right, then," he said, and was inspired to a sudden burst of confidence. "Had my eye on you quite a while. Don't like college men, as a rule; changed my opinion. Always asking 'why?" You and Jenkins make a good team, I think; wouldn't trust either of you alone. Jenkins is—conservative. Knows the business, though, better than either you or I. You're the counter-weight. See? Keep the clock steady. What?"

I stumbled over some sounds which were intended to express my appreciation of the chance. He stopped me.

"No thanks; you'll be on trial. Nothing permanent about it. Make good or come back. I'm going down with you—next week, say; give you a start. After that —on your own feet. Better see Jenkins; lots he can tell

you. You don't know it all yet. See the both of you Talk it over then. That's all."

He turned back to his desk, then swung around as I still lingered.

"Well?" he said.

"I'd like an hour or so off," I explained.

"Whaffor?" he asked suspiciously.

"If I cheer and carry on around here-"

He caught the contagion of my grin.

"Get out of here," he growled, and dismissed me with a lordly gesture.

By some superhuman effort I managed to keep from cheering. I even tried to look solemn as I closed the door and was successful in the effort until the sight of Carr's questioning and commiserating face sent me off into an absurd grin which obscured my eyes and lifted my ears. I couldn't have kept in very long, for Jenkins gave it away by publicly congratulating me. We spent the rest of the day together, Jenkins and I, and that night Hatherly took us home with him and we planned far into the night.

In one other respect I was more successful in selfrepression. I wrote to Bess, an absurd letter full of superlatives, wrote and read it over and then destroyed it. I decided that I wanted to see how she received the news. It was hard work, but I managed to hold myself down

until Saturday.

It was worth the effort.

"No!" she said, and surveyed me with one eyebrow raised half in doubt and half in belief. I had found her kneeling over a flower bed in the little garden behind the house, very grubby and disheveled and stained with mold.

I "crossed my throat and hoped to die." Belief replaced doubt as she remained kneeling, looking up at me. She clapped her hands as she dropped her trowel and struggled to her feet.

"That means-" she said excitedly.

"That I'm not a failure so far," I completed.

"As though you ever were," she smiled in reproach. "It means a lot to you."

"And yourself?"

"I come in on it, too," she admitted, "but I'm glad because it's you."

She stared at me in sudden dismay.

"But New York!" she said. "You won't be home so often!"

"All the more welcome when I do come," I maintained stoutly.

"That's so. . . . Does it pay to be practical?"

"Why—yes," I answered. This was a faint echo of our quarrel of the Sunday before. But I was far from sure. Had I really been looking ahead or had this success come from short sighted application?

"But I haven't been paid yet," I concluded.

"Oh, dcar!" she wailed a moment later. "I've rubbed dirt all over your coat and my hair's coming down and I don't dare touch it!"

I fixed it for her as best I could and then had to rehearse the whole tale again; how I had lost faith in the vague rumors and still kept on plugging, and how I had fully expected to be discharged when Hatherly called me into his office.

"He wouldn't dare," asserted Bess confidently.

I made the most of my triumph. Mrs. Alden appeared in the midst of my recital and rather spoiled it by refusing to enthuse.

"That's good," she said, upon hearing the news. "Did

you water the plants, Elizabeth?"

"Plants? Pooh!" said Bess ungraciously. "Go on; what did Mr. Hatherly say then?"

But Mrs. Alden showed a gradual increase in warmth as I went on, not a very satisfactory sort of interest, to be sure, but still better than indifference. She evinced an irritating interest in the practical side of my promotion, not quite asking questions but leaving obvious opportunities for a statement of my financial condition. I proved willfully blind to these opportunities; to say that my salary would be the same as before—which was the truth—would have taken off the fine edge of success. It was enough for me that I had been promoted to new responsibilities.

My father received the news calmly enough, although he was as happy over it as myself. In his presence I became more modest.

"I'm only on trial, of course," I said finally.

"We're always on trial," he answered, "although sometimes it does seem that the jury has been bribed."

I recall that he was a bit surprised at the suddenness

of my promotion.

"But you saw something of the kind coming, I suppose," he concluded, "and when it came you were ready for it."
"It's been in the air for a long time."

"Thought so. It pays to look ahead and imagine

things, doesn't it?"

"Why—yes," I answered, but I hesitated a little longer than I had in making the same answer to Bess's question. She said that it paid to be practical; my father said that it paid to be visionary. One must be right but which?

That is one question which I have never solved.

## CHAPTER THE SECOND

I

HEAVEN save me from another such job as we found at Brown Brothers; one such experience is enough for a lifetime. Ever since then I have had a horror of remaking and remodeling. I date my first gray hair from that period.

Hatherly went down with us. I remember still the sinking of my heart as we surveyed the place from across the street; despite Hatherly's warning I had expected something better than a dingy front with unwashed windows. I expected that a New York house, even though afflicted with dry rot, would surpass a provincial Boston establishment. We went on a tour of inspection, to an accompaniment of stares and whispered exchanges, Hatherly very voluble and cheerful in his fragmentary way, Jenkins and I plodding dismally behind him. We ended at the office.

"Well, what do you think of it?" jerked Hatherly, cocking one leg over the arm of his chair.

Jenkins looked at me. I looked at Jenkins. Words failed us.

"Out of date and all that," Hatherly went on. "But good metal; needs polishing, that's all. Eh?"

Jenkins answered indirectly. "Any insurance on the place?"

Hatherly nodded.

"Fully covered?"

"Certainly. Think I'm a fool?"

"I'm undecided. In your place I'd buy a barrel of

kerosene and a box of matches. Leave the rest to the rats—enough of them, by the looks of things."

Hatherly snorted.

"You'll find that the easiest way out," argued Jenkins.
"Oh, not so bad as that," encouraged Hatherly. "Good stuff here, but dusty—damned dusty." He waved his arm inspiringly and sneezed. "Just dig into it—clean it up. You'll be surprised."

That was all the satisfaction we got from him. He hemmed and harrumphed and "bwey"-ed about for a while and then rushed off to catch a train back to Boston.

We envied him.

Jenkins and I stared at each other in discouragement. "I never thought I'd keep a museum in my old age," he said finally. "That's what it is—a confounded, billy-bedamned museum. And we've lost our chief freak."

I laughed. "The Old Man?"

"He's in his second childhood," said Jenkins viciously.
"Well, we're here and it's too late to back out," I said.
"Let's go out and have another look at the wax figures."

Hatherly's theory of counterweights was good as far as it went, but it worked out in a way which he scarcely could have anticipated. Instead of Jenkins acting as a check on me, the situation was reversed. For the first week or so Jenkins poked about with an expression of horror on his fine old face. Some of the methods of business were entirely new to us, others we had discarded long ago, but for all of them he expressed unqualified disapproval. The conflict between us came when we finished our survey and started to make changes. Jenkins's idea was to make the place conform in every respect with the Boston house.

We fought—good Lord, how we did fight! I went home at night with a sore throat and argued in my sleep. Jenkins wanted to discard everything with which he was unfamiliar. I could see that a good many of the ways of doing business were superior to the old way with which

we both knew; Jenkins couldn't see it. He had a vast fund of reminiscence which served him in place of argument.

"Yes, we tried that in '89," he would assert. "Or was it '87? The year they had the fire next door. . . . '89, that's it. Fellow named Humphreys suggested it. It didn't work at all, as I remember it."

Then I would expound and explain until at last he gave in through sheer weariness.

"Try it, if you want it, then," he would assent. "But it didn't work then and it won't work now."

I saw to it that it worked now. It had to work. I was on trial.

Hatherly had admitted that Brown Brothers was full of dry rot. He hadn't exaggerated. It was the old story of decay; no new blood and absentee managership. The fact that it held together at all was an ever fresh source of wonder to me. For years the place had gone along in one rut, losing customers only by death and gaining new ones only by accident. The warehouse was filled with pensioners; a few of the men worked and the rest lived on memories of the good old days. They nearly broke my heart. I know of no more discouraging task than trying to inject vitality into a man who has been a mental corpse for a decade. They looked at me, and sniffed, and went on doing their work in the same old doddering way.

We had a grand house cleaning after the first month—that is, Hatherly and Jenkins concocted a list of men who were obviously useless, then Hatherly took himself back to Boston and Jenkins left it to me to do the firing. I did it as diplomatically as possible and referred their wails and complaints to Jenkins. Then he threw them back at me.

"These gentlemen—" he appealed, over the heads of the group which surrounded him. They all turned and looked at me unfavorably. I picked out one from among the group—a man with a bay window and a shameless nose. "Do you really need this job?"

He was highly indignant at my imputation of poverty. "Then is there any good reason why we should keep you?"

"I have been with this house for over twenty years, young man," he snorted. "I brought the house the business of Simpson and Company, a matter of forty thousand and year, and——"

"And for the past five years they've averaged less than four thousand. Why?"

"That is not my affair."

"I see. You've been living on past performances."

He eyed me in utter loathing. Then he turned to Jenkins. "I appeal to you, sir, as one gentleman to another." I was no gentleman, apparently.

Poor old Jenkins! He tugged at his lower lip and looked at me dubiously. "Perhaps we might find——" he

began.

I lost the last shreds of my patience. "You complained that this was a museum," I reminded him. "Now you want to turn it into a cripples' home. We're here to rebuild this place—after these men have let it fall apart. We can't rebuild with old timber. You know it and I know it."

I went away—magnificent—Napoleonic. I had spoken. "I'm sorry, gentlemen," I heard Jenkins say with new vigor, "but it can't be helped."

He came to me later, mournfully. "I hate to fire

people," he confided. "They never understand."

"That bunch will get over it," I said, with the callosity of youth. "None of them need to work. Old Rogers—the one with the side whiskers—was telling me last week about the block of houses he owns. The rest are all like him. They were hopeless."

"Well-we'll see how things go," said Jenkins. . . . .

I look back on these early New York days and realize that there is something lacking. I suppose I should say that New York impressed me, that it inspired my imagination. Really it did nothing of the sort. During the first few months I was impressed by nothing save the endless succession of new problems which confronted me at Brown Brothers; it was weeks before I knew anything of the city beyond the way between the rooming house and the place where I worked. I never explored New York, as I had Boston, perhaps because I had no Kendricks and Luigi to lead me. Even later, when Marks and I began to go about town, the city failed to impress me; I had lost the spirit of inquiry and fallen into the habit of taking things for granted.

I was blind to the inspiration of New York because I had brought my inspiration with me. The material in the old note book which I had kept for over a year began to cohere about one central idea; I was insensible to all

impressions not directly connected with it.

п

The mustering out of the Ancients left us short handed for a time; all told, we got rid of nearly a quarter of the force on the charge of fossilism. Those who remained were up to the usual Hatherly standard, not destined to set the world on fire, but still good and capable men. There were a few notable exceptions; Jimmy Golderick, who manifested a persuasive genius in bringing in settlements of old accounts; Carter Hayes, that attenuated live wire of high conductivity, and meek little Borden whose life long passion for system and more system came to the surface soon after our advent.

And there was Marks, of course. . . .

That sentence in itself is a complete description of Marks. He was in a class by himself. Put him down in any group, attempt to describe the group, and you find yourself tacking that on the end: "And there was Marks." He failed to classify.

I must have noticed him in a dim sort of way during the first few weeks at Brown Brothers. Jenkins and I even talked him over and failed to come to any definite conclusion, save that he was a good man. But we were appraising all the force then; this was prior to the house cleaning. After the eviction of the leisure class he came more and more into our notice.

Jenkins always claimed that he discovered Marks. I dispute that claim; I think that Marks discovered himself. But he would have come to light sooner or later, even if I had not gone in search of Jenkins that day and found him deep in discussion with Marks. They were vastly interested in some sort of chart on Marks' desk, so interested that I stood behind them unobserved.

"And in the third column——" said Jenkins, and scratched his head in an effort of memory.

"The shipping room check?" suggested Marks.

"So it is; so it is. That gives us a double check, you see. No chance of a slip-up, with the office check on this other sheet." He turned and saw me. "How's this, Coffin? You remember that you were complaining over tracing orders? I've figured out something here; look it over."

We had had a vast amount of trouble in keeping track of orders in their progress through the house; previous to the house cleaning three of the pensioners had made it their duty to trot about and keep things moving, creating endless confusion and deluding no one save themselves by their show of industry. The system which had obtained at the Boston place proved of no use under these new conditions. After two or three abortive attempts at solving the problem I had given it up.

"This here is a perforation," explained Jenkins. "It's two sheets, really, both printed the same. Check off your order in this column on both sheets; then one goes

to the office and the other to the truckman. Now then-how did I say that we were to arrange the printed list, Marks?"

"After the stock list."

"That's it. Now——" and he went on to explain his improved method in detail. Marks cut in now and then, to remind him of some feature which he had slurred over. As the explanation proceeded I looked at Jenkins with new respect.

"Well?" he said triumphantly. "It's good," I said emphatically.

"Isn't it?" he crowed delightfully. "Oh, I may be an old duffer and all that, but I can think up something once in a while." He was obviously tickled to death at having beaten me in my own province of improvement. "Any suggestions?" he challenged.

"Not a one," I answered truthfully.

"I'm a son of a gun when I get started," he bragged. "We'll get some system into this old ark yet."

He danced off, to have the sheets typewritten and sent to the printer. I watched him, and wondered if his objections to new methods had been part of a pose after all.

As I turned, Marks winked at me, slowly and deliberately. I understood.

"That was your idea, then."

"Why—not entirely," he replied. "Jenkins suggested that column heading."

"Which is the one objectionable feature. But—how in the deuce did you get him to adopt it? If I had suggested it we'd have fought like two cats in a bag."

He laughed, and ran his fingers through his thick mop of pepper and salt hair. "The harder a person is to drive, the easier he is to lead. Now you—you go at him rather——"

"Bull headed," I supplied, as he hesitated.

"Exactly. You see how it works? If I had called you bull headed you would object—naturally. That was the

idea I had in mind, but I let you suggest it yourself. The same with Jenkins. Lead him along until a thing is under his nose——" He stopped, smiled, and shrugged his shoulders.

"And he discovers it for himself," I completed. "But you don't get the credit."

"No?" he queried, examining a pen point with great interest. "I'm not sure."

He turned back to his work again and I went away wondering whether my method was right after all. Still wondering, I turned into the inner office, and found Jenkins pensively contemplating the sheets which he and Marks had worked over. He made one or two changes, frowned over them, and then erased them.

"Do you know," he said slowly, "we've got some confoundedly smart men about this place? I'm just beginning to find it out. . . ."

I find many of my memories of this time obscured by the figure of Marks. He soon became a figure of importance about the office and warehouse. The fact that he was a Jew was against him at first, but not for long. We forgot it. Neither physically nor mentally was there any connection between Marks and the rest of his race; he was neither self-assertive, bustling, nor grasping. When I first knew him he must have been about thirty-five, already gray about the temples—he was silver haired at forty—short, lean, and discouraged. His only physical peculiarity was a slight waddle in his walk, a barely perceptible out turning of the foot and flexion of the knee.

At thirty-five he was an admitted failure. How or why he came to Brown Brothers' moribund establishment I don't know; I do know that before he came there he had made three starts in the grocery business and failed each time. In each case his failure had come from no fault of his own; he once summed it up as a succession of "crooks, fire, and competition"—the battle, murder and sudden death of the business Litany.

He became indispensable. Neither Jenkins nor I knew the retail end of the business as Marks did, although we were both far ahead of him in knowledge of the wholesale end. We came to rely on his judgment more and more;

he became a frequent third in our conferences.

When we had the warehouse and office running more smoothly-or rather less jerkily-we turned our attention to building up the trade. Here Marks was invaluable. I bullyragged Hatherly into buying an automobile-one of these affairs of the Dark Ages, with a toboggan prow and the engine under the seat. She steered with a tiller and always made heavy weather of it. In this panting and erratic go-cart Marks and I made the rounds of the town, getting into personal touch with our customers, reviving old ones and looking for new business. interesting work, skipping from one little store to another, meeting men of all sorts and conditions. was a larger foreign element among them than I had found in my collecting trips about the Boston territory; Greeks, Jews, Germans, one Syrian place, and a sprinkling of old line Yankees. In one respect they were all alike; each had his special form of complaint and each had his They all took a great own ideas about our business. interest in the rejuvenation of Brown Brothers. For a while I tried to argue with these people, but I soon gave that over and accepted each suggestion as though it was entirely new-following Marks' method.

"You're right, Mr. Pinsky; we do need another truck," I would say, as Pinsky, up in the Bronx, followed us out to the sidewalk to press home his suggestions about quicker delivery. "But you know how we're fixed. And we'll have gasoline trucks in a couple of years, you know."

"Perhaps," said Pinsky doubtfully, "I'm scared of them myself. You gotta consider that us people ain't got room for a big stock, and when we want a thing, we want it."

"I'll put it up to Mr. Hatherly," I answered, cranking the car—she cranked from the side, like a hurdy-gurdy—"and I'll tell him that it's your suggestion. He says himself that a satisfied customer is the best advertisement."

"That's right," said Pinsky, reaching up and patting my arm. "You tell him what I said and he'll shove it through right quick."

And we would chug away, leaving Pinsky beaming and dry-washing his hands on the curb. There is always more

than one way of satisfying a customer.

Back again at the office we would analyze these people, or, rather, I asked questions and Marks analyzed. In time we evolved a form blank for keeping track of our trade.

"Pinsky has a good place," I would suggest.

"Too crowded," Marks would answer, or perhaps he was overstocked or in a poorly chosen locality. Marks always found some trouble—and his points were always well taken.

Marks and I got a good deal of amusement out of these suggestions. I don't know how they impressed him; I know that I formed the habit of putting them down at night, together with Marks' criticisms, considering and testing and gradually weaving them into the old note book. My notes gradually crystallized and cohered into a definite plan, slowly at first, and then taking on structure by leaps and bounds. One thing troubled me immensely; I realized that without Marks this plan was useless. But how to get him——

ш

Clearer than any other event of this time I recall the day when Marks took up his part in this conception of mine. There was a "glory story" written about us once, a rather absurd and over-colored narrative, in which the

entire plan of The Stores sprang up over night, like the palace which the Slave of the Lamp built for Aladdin. We laid out the main features of the structure that night, but it was far from being a complete fabric when dawn surprised us at our work. Only the main outlines were there, a rough and incompleted vision of the whole.

Gottlieb, a little German whose pet idea had been that we move uptown, really started it. With some four or five others of our customers he had started a cooperation scheme, buying directly from the markets and manufacturers instead of purchasing through us. Marks and I had followed this attempt with a great deal of interest. At first we tried to dissuade them, for it meant a loss of trade for us. This failing, we had given them advice and suggestions. While it lasted their project promised great things, but it came to an end in a row which called out the reserves from one of the uptown stations.

"They all end that way," said Marks soberly, handing me the newspaper with a half column account of the affair—it was treated in a semi-humorous manner, I remember. "One member is always a little stronger than the others; then comes jealousy, mismanagement and dissolution. We'll have them all in here in a few days, look-

ing for a new line of credit."

Two of the members of this alliance went out of business, but the others came back as Marks had prophesied, with vague but voluble explanations of their failure. They each blamed the others for stupidity and greediness; if their advice had been taken there would have been no trouble. Last of all came Gottlieb, almost heart broken at his failure. From him we got a clear account of what had happened; sure enough, he had tried to dominate the others and in the resulting squabble had come disaster. But Gottlieb couldn't see why they had failed. He shook his head mournfully, a squat little figure of woe gazing dejectedly into the crown of his hat.

"Well, that's all," he said heavily. "If these others

would have listened to me we'd have made a go of it. . . . After this, Gottlieb sticks by his own place."

"I should advise that," commented Jenkins dryly. "As for your credit—let's see what the books say. I think we can manage it."

They went out together, tall, ascetic Jenkins and fat little Gottlieb with the bristly roll of flesh over his collar, Jenkins bending courteously to listen to Gottlieb's rumbled explanations.

Marks followed them with his eyes, "Just as I said," he commented. "He tried to boss the others, they wouldn't stand for it, and the result was a grand free-for-all."

"You were right," I agreed thoughtfully. "These round robin ways of doing business never seem to get anywhere."

"Everything has a head," he said absently. "They tried to buck a natural law, that's all. . . . Their idea was good. Coöperation is always good."

I had my own ideas about that. "Cooperation is not goods, Marks. The good feature about coöperative stores is the part which isn't concerned with collective action—the buying and the advantages of central management of units. It's——"

"The Rochdale stores-England," he reminded me.

"That's profit sharing—a distinct thing. That involves the customer. You can't consider that over here; we're not built that way. . . . Marks, I believe that what money there is in this business is in the retail end. Or—" I watched the effect of this—"in a combination of the wholesale and retail."

But he proved disappointingly dull.

"A retail grocery is the poorest business risk in the world," he said dismally. "I ought to know."

"How about two stores?"

"Double the risk. Two bad eggs are worse than one."
"But if the first store was good—and the second was like it——"

"No two stores are alike."

"There's no reason why they shouldn't be." I objected. "No reason at all, except that no two men think alike." "But if one man thought alike—I mean if one man——"

"Owned both stores?" Marks was the unconscious victim of his own method of suggestion. "He'd double his

chances of either winning or losing."

"There's no such thing as a perfect store, of course," "You and I know that. Some have one I considered. good feature, some another. Suppose you combined these good features all in one place; is there any reason why you shouldn't multiply that place indefinitely?"

"Many reasons—limitations of territory, the necessities of management, the lack of capital. Put that first. You can't start a store on nothing. And after you start it, you can't go away and let it run itself. You've got to be on the job twenty-three hours a day, and even then you're not safe."

"Why twenty-three hours a day?"

"Something always goes wrong."

I spoke out of the vast depths of my experience. "No need of it. If you had a free hand here couldn't you systematize this place so it would almost run itself?"

"I think I could—so could you."

"Then why not the same in a retail place?"

"I'd like to try it," he said wistfully. "But it's a matter of temporizing-of putting up with what you have.

Why, in my last store—"

"I know. But suppose you started clean and new, with two or three places in good locations. Spend two or three years trying ideas, whittling down, finding the best ways of doing things. Get everything running on ball bearings. Then start to add. Is there any reason why you couldn't add indefinitely, beyond the fact that the business of management would be a limitation? And that's a bridge you could cross when you came to it."

He was interested and yet doubtful.

"Think what you've save on the buying end alone," I

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went on. "In time it would mean the elimination of the profit of places like this."

"You've got to show me."

"I intend to. I may be bragging, but I think that I know this wholesale business as well as the next man. And I'm not getting anywhere. You know the retail end—I know, you've had three failures, but if you don't know more about it than nine-tenths of our customers I'm one Chinaman and you're another. Do you see any prospects here? Or in the retail business—provided you make another start?"

"I'll be hanged if I do," he answered morosely. "I've been trying to get up courage for another start and I can't do it."

"Two heads are better than one. Perhaps this will

help you get back your nerve."

I reached down into the desk and gave him the book over which I had worked so long. He turned it over curiously, glanced at me, then spread it out on the desk

and opened it.

He skimmed over the whole, dipping into it here and there, pausing to read a snatch here and there—I imagine that he came across his own name more than once in this rapid survey. Then he turned to the beginning again. Opposite the first page was a chart of the whole idea, a fan-shaped construction with connecting lines leading from larger to smaller circles. He puzzled over this for a time, got a vague grasp of its essentials, and then detached it from the rest, referring to it as he read He nodded to himself as the plan grew upon him; slowly and doubtfully at first, but as he saw the main features he began to wag his head in approval. It was incomplete, merely a fragment, even in the chart there were sections marked with interrogation points, but it was as complete as a mere mental construction could be. went through it three times, each time more rapidly, getting the main points firmly fixed in his mind.

"Well?" I said finally, as he closed the book.

He hesitated. "My name occurs quite frequently here. You mean—"

He waited, and I smiled at his obvious stratagem. "I mean that you and I share equally," I answered. "Unless, of course, you're satisfied to stay here."

"I'm not."

"Then shall we try it?"

"I'm with you," he said briefly, and we shook hands on it.

"Now show me my mistakes. I've made them, I know."

We went through the entire book again, drifting off into far reaching discussions as we went along, tracing minor matters as far as possible into the future and then coming back to take up some other aspect of the plan. Evening came on, the clatter and rumble in the street dwindled away to silence and still the discussion held us. Toward midnight we sent the night watchman out to Wasserbauer's for coffee and sandwiches and ate as we talked. We combined in attacking my plan from every conceivable angle, questioning, objecting, seeking alternatives; some parts of it withstood our questionings and others we remade in part or in whole. But the main idea, the skeleton of it all, stood intact. It was morning when we finally worked through to the last page of the outline.

Marks struggled with a yawn and came off vanquished. "Let's call it a day," he suggested sleepily.

I gathered up the scattered sheets of notes and patted them together. "You've raised the very devil with my plans," I said almost regretfully. "They're not mine any longer, but ours."

We went out together into the clean morning sunlight.

TV

Well, that was how it started, during the long November night when Marks and I welded together the structure

of The Stores over our sandwiches and lukewarm coffee. The result was only a rough working plan of the framework; during the winter we added to it gradually, a pinch here and a pinch there, gradually smoothing and fashioning our material.

"There's nothing original about the whole affair," Marks declared. "It just consists in doing things better. While we're here, we've got the chance of finding out how others do business and what mistakes they make. After we start we'll have to learn from our own mistakes. It's up to us to learn all we can while we can. . . . I never realized before how little I actually know."

Neither did I. I was impatient at first, but as time went on and I came to appreciate the myriad details which we had to provide for I lost some measure of this impatience and settled down to work and wait.

We stayed on at Hatherly's, doing our usual work during the day and our planning after hours and at odd moments during the day. We questioned, explored, investigated. We went as far as we dared into the affairs of our customers.

"You take a sudden interest in my business," said Pinsky, mystified.

"The more goods you sell the better for us," evaded Marks. "Why don't you move your butter chest from behind the counter, where you can get at it?"

"But—it's always been there," countered Pinsky. "And suppose I moved her out on the front, would I sell any more butter?"

He shook his head in triumph, and Marks gave up his attempt at reconstruction. I scarcely blamed Pinsky; to move the butter chest would have started an endless train of changes. That was one thing which we intended to avoid through this preliminary planning. As far as possible we intended to find the best possible arrangement and then try it out in actual practice.

Every day we added something to our structure, this

or that problem was solved, suggestions disposed of, some finally and others with a choice of alternatives to be worked out later. Sometimes I felt a sneaking sense of disloyalty to Hatherly, but with the end of the reconstruction period my work had become a matter of routine and in reality Hatherly lost nothing. He was satisfied, and said so on one of his frequent visits. Jenkins was pleased also.

"Staying again, eh?" he would inquire. "That's the stuff—keep you out of cheap bar rooms. Did it myself

when I was your age."

"What, the bar rooms?" queried Marks innocently.

Jenkins paused in tucking in the ends of his long muffler. "No, dammit, the work—worked all hours," he exploded. Then he chuckled. "Yes, the bar rooms once in a while. Don't over work."

Marks grinned at me as Jenkins struggled into his overcoat and went out stepping high. "Human old cuss, after all. Now about this——"

And we would fall to with renewed vigor.

But in all our planning there was something lacking, an absence of some necessary element. We felt it vaguely; Marks almost touched it when he said that there was nothing original about our plans. Something was needed beside a central idea dressed in borrowed raiment.

V

At this time there were three of us rooming on the top floor of the old house not far from Brown Brothers, McCollom, Jack Worthington and myself. McCollom, that wild Scotchman, was there when I came. He was doing police courts for the City News Bureau at that time and was remarkable for his magnificent contempt of all official wisdom. More faintly I remember Worthington as he was then; he arrived a few weeks after I came, displacing a middle aged man with lank and discouraged

hair. Worthington had two failings; he wrote verses and read Swinburne aloud in the evening and sold insurance for a living. Beside these two there was a Russian anarchist, in one of the back rooms, who conducted fierce one sided arguments with Worthington as he shaved in the morning, waving his razor about and bouncing fragments of abused English from Jack's head. He left, in the course of time, without gratifying McCollom's earnest wish that he'd cut his throat.

We were all about the same age, and a common isolation drew us together; we borrowed tobacco and finally became well enough acquainted to call each other fighting names.

During the winter a fourth man joined us.

I came home from a late session with Marks, yawning and stumbling over curbstones in a drizzling wet snow. By all right Scipio—surnamed Africanus by Worthington—should have been abed long before, but as I went upstairs he dodged out from his mysterious den in the back regions of the house.

"Thar's a stranger in your room, Mis'r Coffin," he whispered over the banister. "Been thar all evenin'. I ast him to wait here in the hall—but no, he insist that he knows you and swears at me scandalous. So I let him in."

"What's his name?" I asked.

"I forget," admitted Skip. "But he's got on a straw hat—and weather like this, too! Mostly them people calls 'emselves Napoleon."

I climbed, Skip bringing up a safe and conservative rear.

"See him?" he whispered, pointing through my open door.

I saw. The stranger sat under the green shaded light; in addition to the straw hat he had donned my red bathrobe. His face was thin and yellow. And, as a final touch, he had taken from the walls all my Whitehaven

paintings, propped them on chairs and table, and sat sur-

veying them critically.

"Say," queried the apparition, "how long since they've built over the Point? And what's become of Littlefield's fish house? Who painted these things, anyway?"

I admitted my guilt.

"No!" he croaked. "So that's what you're doing. I always knew you'd come to a bad end. You don't remember me, do you? Buck's Island—the Shadow——"

He removed his tattered panama and grinned up at me.

"Stowell! You confounded old ghost! What have you been doing with yourself? Where's your hair?"

"In Venezuela. Fever, you know. I've---"

He broke off and stared over my shoulder at Skip. That worthy, at sight of Dick's uncovered head, had gone off in an explosion of Senegambian laughter. I led him gently outside.

"So you're an artist chap," resumed Stowell question-

ingly.

"No. I'm a clerk in a wholesale grocery house," I corrected. That mistake out of the way, we settled down to catch up the threads of the past. He had just landed that morning from a New Orleans boat—hence the straw hat—and we had the events of five years and more to go over. My part was soon told, the final two years at college, then Hatherly's and finally our New York place, but beside Dick's narrative it seemed most commonplace and gray.

He gave me just the bare outline of it that night, a brief, laconic Odyssey of five years spent in wandering about South and Central America, building railroads in the upland coffee country of Brazil, working on railroads and breakwaters on the western coast and once serving as second engineer on a side wheel tub which wallowed from

port to port on the Caribbean.

"Oh, yes," he said, fishing into his pocket and tossing

me a great emblazoned decoration. "I'm a chevalier now—don't laugh—Don Ricardo Stowell de San Luis and the rest of it. That piece of hardware and a yard of ribbon stand for six months' work, fighting land crabs and helping rebuild an old fort on the sand pit off Andotinna."

I swung the enameled star to and fro by its gaudy and frayed ribbon as he went on. It was a queer panorama which he unrolled as the snow flakes hissed and whirled outside the windows. He unrolled it slowly and jerkily, now from one end and now from the other, hurrying on when I wished him to go into detail and pausing over inconsequential and unrelated memories as they crowded into his mind. I retain a strange medley of impressions of his story; it brought back the times when we had sprawled on the cliffs of the Island and imagined such things. That is, I had imagined them; now Stowell had lived them and come back to tell about it. Panama; something big was going to break there soon; Bolivia-"The most wonderful cattle country in the world, back from the coast"—; Argentina—. That brought Whitehaven and Bess to mind and we wandered off into home talk. As well as I could I satisfied his eagerness to hear from home, raking my memory for news of figures long lost to sight.

It was very late when we turned in, and I was hard put

to find coverings enough to satisfy Dick.

"Cold," he mumbled, as he dropped off to sleep, "First snow I've seen for years. Remember the time we buried Jimmy Blackburn in the drift and had to get shovels to dig him out?"

There was no work for me the next day. Dick insisted on a holiday. We bought a decent hat to replace the straw atrocity and got the biggest fur coat we could find in town. He stared at the motors and boasted of having seen one two years before in Rio.

He broke into my work a great deal during the weeks

that followed, not an intentional interruption, but his presence made a break in the steady current of my work. He settled down in the anarchist's room opposite mine, stocked it with furniture and what few possessions he had brought back from the south, and started to grow a new crop of hair. He fell in easily with McCollom and Worthington; Mac got material for several Sunday supplement articles out of him and Worthington was inspired to start a new series of lyrics—"Songs of the Southern Cross," he called them. And, a wonderful thing, he sold them, and the three went on a celebration and came home to rout me from my figuring, Worthington insisting on reciting the whole series from end to end, Dick strumming an accompaniment on a battered old mandolin and Mac doing the pantomime.

After the novelty of getting back wore off, Stowell found time hanging heavy on his hands. He formed the habit of dropping in on us at Hatherly's in the afternoon, wandering about the warehouse, and, when tired of that, sitting in the office and yawning over our small stock of trade literature. Once, as Marks and I were threading our way down town in the car, we passed Dick, fur coat and all, perched high on the seat of one of our trucks, he and the driver smoking long cigars and enjoying them-

selves hugely.

He took a great interest in our plans, asking questions without end. After he thoroughly understood what we were aiming at he began to dip his finger into our pie, always apologizing for his intrusion but sometimes surprising us by his keen analysis of our difficulties. Once or twice we asked his opinion of minor matters over which we differed, and considering his slight knowledge of the problems the solutions were surprisingly good, backed by clear common sense.

"Would we ever have thought of that?" Marks asked me one day, after Stowell had overturned one of our minor pinnacles with a single thrust and then gone out to chat with the head shipping clerk. "I don't think so. . . . What is he planning to do when he gets on his feet again?"

I told him the various things which Dick had in mind.

"We're going to need a man like him some day," he considered, digging away at his blotter with a pen. "We need him now, for that matter. Common sense is a rare commodity. He sees things from the outside—something you and I can never do. I wonder——"

He drummed on his desk and trailed off into silence.

"If we could use him?" I completed.

"No; not that," said Marks. "I wonder if we can get along without him."

VI

Stowell and I resolved to go home together for Christmas.

"You can stay here if you want," he threatened, "but I'm going home and see a regular Christmas tree and plug snow balls at the Orthodox choir when they come around singing carols. And I'm going skating, too; wonder if the marsh is frozen over this year?"

He went to the mirror and grinned at himself.

"Do you suppose they'll know me?" He had gained a good deal of weight since coming back, and had lost something of that unearthly sallowness which had startled me at first, but he was still far from being himself. He gazed anxiously at the havoc which the fever had wrought on his hair. "Do you know," he said gravely," I think these two patches here are growing together." He combed his scanty locks across the bare patches and stood back to survey the result. "How's that?"

"Fine," I answered. "Just like the map of South America; you can stick pins in it and map out your travels. Take that long hair to represent the Amazon—"

The hairbrush barely missed me.

I am sorry now that these trips home were not more frequent. Bess and I seemed to have forgotten the differences which we had fought over while I was in Boston. In reality they were not forgotten; I came home at longer intervals now and when I came there was so much to talk about that we had no chance to quarrel. This Christmas visit stands out as an especially happy period. Bess was still as discontented as ever, but the discontent was not

so apparent.

We went skating and sleigh riding, routed out some of our old friends and got up a straw ride to a road house out in the country and in general enjoyed ourselves immensely. Dick entertained the circle of Fire Worshipers with his recitals of adventure—a changed circle now, for Jim Knowles had gone where houses cease to worry and only Captain Waldron, a shade more wrinkled and a deal more dogmatic, was left to carry on the work of enlightenment. Once, as I went along Front Street, Dick and a guerilla band of his young nephews assaulted me with a sudden bombardment of snowballs; they were a band of intrepid patriots, led by their fearless chieftain against the proud and haughty Spaniard. They fought with great skill and valor and the Spaniard fled in great disorder.

I told my father nothing of our plans; he had upset one of my great schemes and I was not disposed to give him the chance of casting cold water on this one. I knew that this was no boyish, will o' the wisp scheme, I knew that it was founded on hard cold fact, but until I knew these facts from all angles and had the figures to prove them I was content to wait. Bess had known about our plans from the first.

I don't know what she really thought of our project; I thought that I knew but in the light of later events I question that knowledge. She took a keen interest in all our planning, demanded explanations of points which were not quite clear and even argued with me about minor mat-

so much

ters. Undoubtedly she was interested; perhaps it was not what she thought of it as why she thought as she did that puzzled me.

I think that Bess was interested because it was "big business," or at least big business in the making. haps this was due to my earlier letters on the subject; at first, I know, I was interested mainly in the completed structure, the network which we had as an ultimate end. I overemphasized this element of our plans. Later, as Marks and I worked over the matter, I came to appreciate that this end was still far in the future, that between the present and the finished structure there was a stretch of years, years filled with hard, slow work. To a certain extent I put away the future and worked for the present. Bess never made this distinction. Through my faulty perspective she confused the near and distant future. To this day I believe that she expected the entire plan, with all its ramifications and details, to spring into being at once. It was hard to disillusion her. These small matters over which we expended so much thought and labor were poor subjects for conversation; it was impossible to become enthusiastic and interesting over the merits and selling powers of various brands of canned salmon.

I say that Elizabeth expected the entire structure to spring up immediately. She did at first, but as the months passed and we still marked time and planned she realized, as I had, that as a whole the creation was still a thing of the future. But she knew nothing of the difficulties which we had to overcome and the slowness of finding the best possible methods of doing things. I tried to point out that we had only a few hours a day in which to plan, that we were saving money and time by learning through the mistakes of others rather than by experience, but she failed to see it.

"Any one can start a grocery store," she declared. "You know what people eat, don't you? And all you have

to do is get those things and sell them. I don't see where the difficulties come in."

I tried to show her. I remember that I was vastly pleased with my command of trade jargon; looking back I see that my explanations must have been as incomprehensible as an exposition of the fifth dimension. She couldn't see why it should take so long just to plan matters.

"Oh, hang business!" I exclaimed at last. "That's all I've heard for the last three months—shall we do this? shall we do that?—and I'm tired of it. Let's talk of something worth while—Dick, for instance. I wonder if he's thawed out yet?"

This was the night after the straw ride to the Blue Anchor Inn. Dick had insisted on driving the barge home, with the result that he had been nearly frozen when we drove into Whitehaven after midnight. Bess and I had kept warm after the approved straw ride fashion. She laughed now as she recalled how Dick had slowly and creakingly descended from his perch and shivered reminiscently as she stretched forth her hands toward the grateful warmth of the fireplace.

"Poor old Dick!" she said softly. "He looks terribly old."

And "poor old Dick," I echoed mentally, not because he looked old and yellow, but because he was missing so much. I looked at Bess as she leaned forward, her clear profile illuminated by the firelight and standing forth against the darkness of the room, and I pitied Dick from the very bottom of my heart. Bess was all in brown that night, a brown with rich golden high lights and deep umber shadows; I remember the glint of the firelight on the smooth swell of her hair—knotted low at the back of her head, as was the fashion then—and the dull glitter of the chain about her neck as it rose and fell, a glitter that rap to and fro along the links in a slow rhythm. Yes, it was too bad about Dick.

"You should have seen him when he landed," I returned. "He has picked up wonderfully since then."

"Perhaps; but he's changed immensely," she said absently. "We've all three of us changed a good deal."

I made some remark to the effect that if we were as much improved by the change as she was I considered myself flattered.

"Thank you," she said serenely. She looked at me critically, one eyebrow raised. "You've improved, of course, although you're still too thin to be a perfect Adonis."

"But I'm strong," I argued, sliding toward her. "Let me demonstrate."

"No you don't!" She threatened me with the chain. "I haven't drawn a deep breath since last night."

Like Cæsar, I overcame.

"But we have changed," she went on. "You're not the same, neither is Dick. And mother—has she told you about her 'investments'?"

Her tone implied a contempt of investments. Now that I thought of it, Mrs. Alden had changed; I recalled vague allusions to finance, instead of the usual small gossip and talk about her husband. By this time all hope of Mr. Alden returning from the Klondike had vanished.

"Mother has some money of her own, you know," she said, and hesitated.

"I know," I said quickly. I had always suspected that Alden had been a parasite.

"And lately Mr. Learoyd has been handling it for herstocks, you know. That's his business. Just guessing, they are—like that Italian game you showed me once, morro—morra, is it? If you guess the right number of fingers you win."

She was silent for a moment.

"But they seem to be guessing right. Mother's been talking about the old Carver place, and if everything goes well she intends to buy it in the spring. She's worse than father ever was—she doesn't tell me about anything but goes about mumbling to herself, like a silly old conspirator."

It seemed funny then, but somehow or other the jest has since lost its savor. There was something incongruous in this linking of finance and Mrs. Alden; I have laughed since to think of it, but I have laughed at myself and not at her.

"I hope she comes out all right," she continued. "I hope—but I'm always hoping. It doesn't seem to do any good."

This was a criticism of life which I never met. How could I? She was tired of living in a world of possibilities and I had no actualities to offer.

"Like the Lady of Shalott," she said gloomily. "Always shadows—and more shadows. . . . Oh well!"

I went back to work filled with the determination to hurry things along, labored feverishly for a week or so, and then had to undo my work and go more slowly. However much I struggled against the innate inertia of time, I struggled in vain. For a time I thought seriously of giving up Hatherly's and devoting myself entirely to our plans. But I decided to stay; I had to make a living and by leaving Hatherly's I would cut myself off from all chances of observing the mistakes of others.

## VII

Stowell stayed home for two weeks, then drifted in unannounced one evening. Marks had dropped in at my room on his way home; Stowell interrupted our planning.

"Dull old place," he commented. "I stood it as long as I could."

He yawned and started on the pile of mail that had accumulated during his absence. Marks and I went on with our discussion. We were working over one of our semi-final problems then, making a plot of the arrange-

ment of our floor space, working in all the suggestions and ideas which we had been gathering for months. We had taken the best from each store and it made a good showing on the plan. We were so engrossed that we failed to notice that Stowell had abandoned his reading and stood behind us. There came a lull in our talk and he broke in.

"Where's the stove and sand-box?" he demanded. "You can't run a store without a stove for them to put their feet against, can you?"

Marks started to explain and object, but Stowell cut him short.

"Perhaps you don't plan to have Fire Worshipers," he said. "Let me look at your plan; this black and white stuff is something in my line."

He bent over the sheet as we pointed out the arrangements to him, rather proud of our work.

"I wish I knew enough to criticize this intelligently." He put his finger on the shelves at the right of the plan. "How much clearance between these?"

We weren't sure.

"You know the average size of the cans you're intending to fill them with?" he continued patiently.

"About so high," said Marks and held up his hand, indicating the height between thumb and forefinger.

"I see," said Dick soberly. "Just as high as a piece of string. And I suppose you plan to sell a basketfull of them for a handful of money."

Marks scratched his head.

"How much clearance between shelves and counters?"
We know that, for I had gone to the trouble of measuring it.

"Rather narrow," decided Dick. "You'll have your clerks scraping past each other all the time, dropping stuff and getting in the way. Better make it wider. There's another thing; you don't want all this scraping

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and scrouging around behind the counters. Arrange your stuff so one man can fill any reasonable order."

I objected. We had taken these things from actual

practice.

"That's no argument at all," he retorted. "Start in from the bottom and build up. Throw these old ideas overboard."

Marks grinned at me; here was my own argument used against me.

"What else is wrong?" I asked.

"I don't know—probably a lot of things," he said thoughtfully. "I wish you'd take me in with you and give me a chance to find out."

Marks and I looked at each other in astonishment.

"Well-" Marks began.

"One minute," Dick interrupted, and produced a letter. "I've just had good news and bad news. That lighthouse proposition has fallen through. That's the bad news. The other—read this."

He tossed me a letter with a vivid orange stamp on the envelope. I spelled it out slowly, for my Spanish had gone rusty with disuse, and found it an offer of twenty thousand pesos for Señor Stowell's option on a certain piece of land in Chile.

"Nitrate workings," he explained, and refused to go further.

"But twenty thousand-"

"That probably means five thousand gold when old Garcilasso gets through wailing about hard times and sickness in his family—he's related to more invalids than you can imagine. The option alone is worth five times what he offers; he's probably got up some sort of a dicker with the English firm that was nosing around when I left. . . . But here's my proposition. You'll need all the capital you can get. Good. You two dreamers need a guardian—a practical man. Also good. I offer you the

two at once—with my undeniable good looks thrown in. How about it?"

Marks looked at me. I laughed.

"Sit down," said Marks. "We're not laughing at you. The funny part of it is that we decided a month ago that we couldn't get along without you."

I nodded confirmation.

Dick laughed. "And I decided a month ago that I was tired of knocking around. This—say, what have you named this scheme of yours? No name yet? Why not just The Stores? Simple, dignified and—and inclusive."

"There's an idea," agreed Marks.

And so it was.

## VIII

As our plans neared completion I went home, for the first time since our Christmas excursion. Stowell and Marks had secured their part of the amount needed for our start, Marks through some mysterious channel of his own and Stowell from his Don Garcilasso. I planned to borrow my part from my father, or, rather, to persuade him to invest.

I had little trouble in persuading him. I had already written to him when I thought the state of our plans warranted it, and he already knew a great deal about our plans, although he looked dismayed when I spread out the calculations, blue prints and other proofs which I had brought home.

"You remember the old saying?" he asked. "'There are three kinds of lies—lies, damned lies and statistics.'

Just tell me about it."

I told him. He had a few questions on points which I had failed to make clear. Then he agreed. I had expected it, but it was a relief to know.

"One question more," he said as I gathered up my unused proofs.

"Yes?"

"I suppose you often wish that you were teaching school instead of mucking around with low things like groceries and dollars?"

"Very often-about once a year," I answered.

He laughed.

It was mid-afternoon of the next day when I turned up High Street to the old Carver house. Mrs. Alden's "investments" had turned out well, evidently, for of late what few letters I had received from Bess had been brief and hurried scrawls telling of the troubles of moving and setting up a new establishment. I had loitered about the store all morning, trying to get up courage to call; I felt a curious diffidence, almost amounting to fear, about calling. It was a different matter from just running across the street.

As a boy I had always had a reverence of High Street and something of it came back to me that afternoon. be sure, the old houses on either side had lost a great deal of the magnificence with which my imagination had endowed them; their lawns, which I remembered as broad acres of smooth, close-cropped green, had contracted somehow or other and brought the houses nearer the street. Here was the Bixby "mansion," once a veritable Taj Mahal with its red and green slate roof, its porte-cochère and ginger-bread work; tawdry enough now, and in most atrocious architectural taste, I thought. And beyond that Captain Carrol's house under the great elm, a green and white colonial place which I had once despised as out of date and now found unexpectedly beautiful. But despite this changed view High Street was still High Street, the Fifth Avenue of my boyhood, a Fifth Avenue vaulted over with the interlacing boughs of the cathedral elms whose protruding roots made the sidewalks perilous on dark nights. I was still somewhat in awe of it.

I reached the old Carver house. Strange how these old houses clung to their names; the last Carver had died

twenty years ago, but the name still remained—would remain, I supposed, long after the family had passed from memory. It took more than fresh paint, striped awnings at every window, and an obtrusively new porch—like a fresh fringe on an old gown—to bring about these changes. Change was slow in towns which were thriving young settlements when Wolfe stormed the Plains of Abraham. Even the tennis court at the side of the house would still be Madam Carver's garden as long as there remained in town a single gray-beard who had stolen puckery gooseberries and currants there as a barefoot boy. . . .

I like to remember Elizabeth as she was that afternoon. slender, all in white, as we sat on the terrace at the side of the house and watched the players in the court below. It was one of those May days which steal ahead of their proper season, a breathless, perfumed ripple of summer. I remember a pink and white mist of apple blossoms amid the light green of the orchard across the hedge and a stray scent of lilac from some bold and early bush. There was a shifting and fragmentary background of tennis-playing youths and young girls-I remembered some of them as having been in short trousers and pigtails when I had left for college. Mrs. Alden, grown suddenly self assertive with the change in her fortunes, called them over and introduced them one by one; I also had to meet Learoyd again. Mrs. Alden always made a state matter of introduetions.

When Elizabeth's mother was quite sure that I knew every one within sight she showed a disposition to dominate the conversation, displaying an interest in The Stores and all our doings. Apparently she thought none too highly of any of them, and I am afraid that my answers to her questions were far from satisfactory. I was conscious of a sudden weariness of everything connected with the making of money. I found myself wandering off into a futile and inconclusive argument with her, much against my will; something about May wheat and copper stocks,

things of which I knew little and in which had even less interest. I have a vague remembrance of her use of high sounding phrases in an inexact manner; I know that her attitude toward me irritated me in some subtle fashion. She was not exactly patronizing, nor yet antagonistic, but she had the air of thinking that we might use our money to better advantage. I tried to cut the whole distasteful subject short.

"Whatever money I make," I declared, "will be for service rendered."

She blinked at that, and struck off at a new angle on a garbled and distorted version of the old capitalistic argument. I answered absently; I felt singularly ill at ease. It is a small detail, but the fact that I wore a heavy dark suit while the rest were in flannels and duck had a good deal to do with my feeling of discomfort. I was entirely out of touch with this sort of life. I suppose it was the change in Bess and her mother more than anything; Mrs. Alden had been a negligible factor before, while now she seemed to assume a new importance. I began to wonder if this change was going to affect me. There seemed an immeasurable gap between this new way of living and the semi-squalidness of the old house opposite ours. And yet it was not the material difference; I imagined that I detected a change in their attitude toward me. I felt that I had shrunk in importance. Instead of being welcomed, I was accepted. I was outside. They talked of subjects which I didn't understand and then volunteered no explanations. I didn't like it.

Bess perched on the broad railing of the terrace as we talked. She entered into the conversation only occasionally, and then only in answer to a direct question. Between times she plucked nervously at a climbing vine.

Finally Learoyd took pity on me and left. Mrs. Alden walked down the path with him—evidently there was some discussion which demanded privacy.

"You haven't seen the house yet, have you?" Bess asked.

"It's quite different from the old place. Let's go-before mother comes back."

She was evidently quite pleased with the house. I remember it now as a succession of high-studded rooms with pretentiously decorated ceilings, a narrow hall with an obtrusive black walnut newel post and balustrade, a bare and stifling little conservatory off the dining room and everywhere evidences of a conflict of tastes between Bess and her mother. There were old pieces of furniture from the old house and shiny new chairs fresh from the upholsterers; in the dining room a fish-and-game abomination confronted an ultra-modern sideboard, and above every fireplace—ineffectual little fireplaces surrounded by square yards of tinted tiling and carving-were vast empty spaces of mirrors emphasizing the note of bareness and incompletion. Had I been in a critical mood I might have pointed out these incongruities, but Bess was so pleased with it all that I lacked the heart to do it. She appreciated that it was far from perfect.

"There are a lot of changes to be made," she said doubtfully, when we had completed our inspection. "Mother insisted on a great many things which are rather absurd.

. . . Let's go outside."

Whatever absurdities and evidences of ill-taste people put into their houses they are happily unable to do much toward disfiguring the land about them; Nature mocks their efforts and refuses to conform. I remember quite clearly the clumps of evergreens, once trimmed to geometrical forms but now grown up to wildness, the low-groined vaults of the orchard with drifts of fallen petals in faint reflection of the drifting white clouds, and, down the aisles of gray trunks, the gleam of the misty blue headlands in the distance. We moved through the chequered sunlight and shadow, Bess pointing out contemplated changes and I more engrossed in watching the play of the alternate sunlight and shade among the coils of her coppery

hair. She had a faint, half realized idea that the house fell short of perfection.

"If it were only all as beautiful as this," she said with a half sigh. "But we'll have things in order by autumn, whether mother likes it or not."

There was a little rustic summer house among the pine clumps, now mercifully covered by a climbing grape vine which was just beginning to send out wooly little shoots. And—final note of New England splendor—before the summer house was a pool, with a boy-and-dolphin fountain spouting a thin tinkling stream, a jet which flashed into the pool and fed the tiny brook which dripped slowly over a miniature fall and wandered away between stone banks. I wondered idly how it came to be placed in this out-of-the-way corner; usually they were set on the front lawn for the world to admire and envy. We sat here and drifted off into talk of many things.

I remember nothing of what we said at first; I imagine it was the usual catching up with the progress of events. My feeling of strangeness vanished; I was wonderfully and indolently contented with myself. There was no more planning until my mind frayed off into rags, but the realization and working out of actualities.

Bess shifted the talk to nearer grounds.

"Tell me about your latest plans," she said. "They interrupted you so that I couldn't get all of it."

"There's not much to tell, beyond what I've written you," I answered. "We're ready to start—did you understand that my father has come in with us—financially?"

"That's why you came home—to see him?"

"And you, of course." I told her of my interview of the night before.

"That puts the last touches on it," I said. "We'll be started in a month. But it's really only a small start. These first places won't amount to much in the whole—

just a trial and working out of what we think may be good."

"I thought you were ready to start on the whole thing,"

she objected.

"Hardly. I wish we could. But we must work these matters out before we dare to apply them on a large scale. It takes capital to make a big start, more capital than we have, even if we dared start largely."

"Couldn't you get it?"

"I don't know; I suppose so, if we tried. But you see that would mean outside control."

"But you could? Then why don't you?"

"Oh!" I dismissed the idea impatiently. She failed to understand that we wanted to be independent, to have . The Stores build themselves as far as possible.

"You're so sure that you're right; why don't you go

ahead?" she persisted.

"We're not sure, Bess. That is, we are sure that the idea is sound, but uncertain about the practical side of it. We intend to experiment, to find out the best ways before we get in so far that change will be expensive and impossible."

For a moment I congratulated myself on my adroit

avoidance of a threatened difference.

"But—no matter." Bess watched the play and drift of the fountain with a frown wrinkling her forehead.

"'Wisely and slow; they stumble that run fast,'" I quoted, "and we can't risk a stumble. We must learn to walk before we try to run."

"I suppose so," she answered impatiently. "How long

will it take you to learn to walk?"

"Marks says five years, Stowell says three, and I—I'm not sure. Somewhere between the two, perhaps. It depends on your definition of walking."

"As long as that?" she commented absently.

Three years isn't a lifetime, I thought resentfully. Three years ago I was a green cub, just getting out of

college. It seemed hardly any time at all. And three years more was just a step. And three years after that . . . I drifted off into speculation and romancing. I came back to earth violently.

"How long have we been engaged?" Bess was asking.

"Three years-nearly."

"As long as that. It doesn't seem so long, does it?"
"No." I was relieved to find that we agreed.

"I thought it wouldn't-to you."

"It seems longer to you, then?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "You know as well as I that a week here is a year anywhere else."

"But you're progressing-"

"From one cell to another—and in the same prison," she completed.

I adopted a policy of silence. That sometimes was successful in putting an end to these fits of discontent. But ordinary methods were useless.

"You know that mother—doesn't like you?" she said

slowly.

"She never has, Bess."

"Do you know why?"

"I'm not worrying," I answered shortly. "She doesn't matter."

"She thinks you're like my father," Bess said quietly.

"And objects because of that? What has she been saying?" I was aroused for once.

She evaded my question. "I'm not sure but she's right

-partly."

"Thank you," I said angrily.

"There is a likeness," she went on steadily. "He was always scheming something—and——"

"Always failing," I completed bluntly. "I'm just the

same, I suppose."

"I wish I knew." She puckered her brows in perplexity. This comparison to Alden angered me. That irresponsible and futile dreamer! There was no comparison. I

must have muttered to myself for she looked up with a faint smile.

"I know; I'm not very cheerful, am I?" The smile was gone as quickly as it came. "I have nothing to be cheerful over. I'm tired to death of living here, always living in hopes of something just around the corner—something three years away—perhaps still further distant. I'm always waiting for somebody—and never allowed to do anything for myself. Just waiting. I'm tired."

"I know." I rose and went to the door of the summer house. There was nothing new in this complaint, except

perhaps that it hurt me more than usual.

"You don't know; you can't," her voice followed me. "You have your work, and I have nothing but—a lot of trumpery ways of passing the time. Passing time isn't living. I can't even watch things being done." Her voice dropped, and she went on. "I can't look ahead three years."

"I'm in the same position," I reminded her.

She was silent for a moment.

"I'm not considering you," she said deliberately. "I've given that up. I'm just thinking of myself. . . . Do you love me?"

I felt her hand on my shoulder, and turned to find her facing me. She looked at me beneath level brows.

"You know I do," I answered, with a catch in my voice. "Then take me out of this—now."

"I can't Bess. I'll be very poor for at least two years—perhaps longer—perhaps all my life. This is the most uncertain time of all. . . . It's no easier for you than it is for me."

"Then it's-not now?"

The appeal went out of her voice and a new element entered. Bess was never more desirable than at that moment; I made my answer with an effort.

"No," I said.

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# FLOOD TIDE

Her hand dropped. "I said I couldn't wait," she said wearily.

I stared at her. "But there's no other solution."
"There is always a third way."

"What?"

"This."

I looked down. She held out to me the ring which I had bought with my first savings at Hatherly's.

## CHAPTER THE THIRD

I

"Well, that's ended," I thought savagely.

I had been stupefied at first; there was no warning of this rock which had pierced my gilded galley of dreams. All about me clear seas and sunny weather, stuns'l breezes and a steady glass—and then disaster. I tried to argue at first, hopeless arguments based on inessentials, trying to patch up the break and go on as before. But it was too deep a break for that. Elizabeth met and turned my futile reasons with a weary and obstinate shake of her head. It ended by my throwing the ring amid the pattering drops of the little fountain in the pool.

So I smoked an endless succession of cigars on the train

and thought that it was all ended.

But it was far from that. The first shock passed, after a period of muzzy self-recrimination. I settled back to work. We abandoned Hatherly's and made our start. In the rush and bustle of establishment I worked for one thing only—forgetfulness. I succeeded. When the first breathing spell came remembrance was a tapping on a half healed wound rather than a tearing apart of still raw edges.

But I was still hurt. Worse still, and utterly damnable, I was bitter against Elizabeth. I saw dimly that the fault was mine, yet stubbornly held out that the break was none of my making. Elizabeth and I were always at cross purposes; we looked at life from two divergent and irreconcilable viewpoints. Sooner or later a break was inevitable. We were fortunate that it came as it did and not later . . . So I thought, and through sheer inertia went on

planning, working, worrying over details. Work was good. It excluded other thoughts.

But even work was an ineffectual barrier against the In time this irrational bitterness faded. that the differences which had driven us apart should have drawn us closer together. I missed the inspiration of Elizabeth's quickness, her eagerness, missed the balancing of her common sense against my flamboyant imagination. What had seemed inherent differences, impossible to pass, now became the grating or ragged edges which time would have worn and fitted. More than once. as we translated some plan into actuality, I remembered that Bess had suggested this or criticized that; I felt again that momentary quickening of the pulse. . . . I drifted off into new imaginings. I believed—and still believe—that Elizabeth's quarrel was not with me, but with this alchemistic quality within me which transmuted to-day's solid reality into to-morrow's problematical El Dorado. But we were succeeding; others beside myself had glimpsed the distant vision. Stowell planned a trip home. I would go with him, no longer a futile dreamer, but with both feet on the solid ground of fact. Penitent, perhaps, but penitent in the knowledge that my case was partly proved. And then-

But Stowell went home alone. He received one of those fat double enclosures which had troubled me so during the old Boston days; he read, and passed it over to me without comment. Elizabeth had married Learoyd. . . .

That was the end. The future held but one thing, The Stores. All else in life had been taken from me, lost beyond recovery. And lost through no fault but my own.

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Whatever satisfaction I find in reviewing the growth of The Stores is connected with these early days. It was a time of construction, of seeing to-day's imaginings be-

come to-morrow's realities. Later, when The Stores was "Big Business" in actuality instead of potentiality, we lost touch with reality and wrestled with great and intangible abstractions. But in the first days it was all real, all good. I am a dreamer, but no thrill of the dreamer's life equals that of beating down and subduing the stubbornness of raw material. This was my one touch of it.

Many times the three of us worked far into the night: more than once I remember the scrub-woman, that harbinger of early dawn, coming in to break up our councils I recall long sessions of planning in our first office, a sort of hanging balcony in the rear of one of the first three stores, an extraordinarily cramped and inconvenient little den with a low roof which forced me to go around with a perpetual reverential inclination of my head. There was a skylight overhead, a convenient exit for cigar smoke and an entrance for a pale, filtered imitation of daylight. Our furnishings were of the simplest; an immense shiny desk with a roll-top—this to catch the eye of the casual visitor and awe him with its magnificence—and another desk of doubtful age, with a decrepit slant top and hermetically sealed drawers. There was also an old ark of a typewriter, second cousin to a drop forge and related by sound to a McCormick reaper. Stowell used this as a gymnasium. And, in the intervals of his noisy pounding, we planned and discussed new things. It was characteristic of these early days that we always found some new difficulty to chew over after we had disposed of the day's routine.

"Say," Marks would blurt out. "What the devil's the matter with our windows? No good. Unattractive. We've got to figure that out. Know anything about it, Coffin?"

I didn't. My father's procedure scarcely applied here; his system had been to fill the windows with rakes and hoes in the spring, and with a variation of oilskins and

rubber boots in the fall. But I developed theories; Marks added his own observations; Stowell arranged and classified them—and there was another problem solved. . . .

Later I find my memories connected with our rooms—this must have been between the balcony office and the Trumbull period. Here we had McCollom as an unsympathetic audience; he seemed to find something funny in our plans and was forever making absurd propositions and egging us on to defensive arguments. We were undemocratic, he asserted, unfair; we were merely taking advantage of the stupidity of others, with all this elimination of waste and useless parts. And, as most people were stupid and wasteful, we were predatory. We deprived people of the right to life, liberty and loaf. Stowell and I paid small attention to his absurdities, but occasionally he drew Marks into fierce debate. Marks' sense of humor was flecked with blind spots.

Last and most wonderful event of this period was our first expansion. The abandonment of the balcony office was the end of our period of trial. We gave up our plans of autonomous financing and took on capital. This made a forced maturing of our plans at once possible and obligatory. Greenwood and Lyons-geborn Grunewald and Lowengart-took over a quarter interest in our plans and supplied funds for early expansion. They were suspicious at first, very suspicious; Greenwood followed Marks in his explanations as one watches a magician take eggs and rabbits from a hat. There must be a trick somewhere. Marks rather overdid the matter, for after investigation the pair came around and made an offer for the controlling interest. We finally reached an agreement of twenty-five per cent and a sliding scale of further investment.

We started at the Trumbull with two rooms in the rear of the third floor, two dingy and inconvenient little rooms looking out on a walled-in court. As we added to our chain we took in more and more of the third floor. An enameled brick concern in the office beside ours moved to better quarters and we acquired their space; an advertising agency further down the corridor departed between two days and their office was added to ours. The Trumbull was an outworn old trap, fallen from high estate to a nursery of new fledged ventures. Firms started there, but seldom remained for any length of time. They either failed or moved. We stayed longer than any of our neighbors, expanding in the Trumbull as we expanded in the city.

One suite of offices we were unable to secure and we finally overflowed to the floor below. This increased rather than diminished our difficulties. Life became one

perpetual scramble up and down stairs.

This rambling, planless extension became at last a positive menace. We were in danger of getting inured to this lack of system; we were becoming decentralized. Matters which should have passed off as mere routine became stumbling blocks; it was impossible to keep order in an office which had no definite plan of being. There were innumerable minor vexations; orders were side tracked and forgotten, papers were mislaid, every one was in the way of every one else. To make matters still worse, the warehouse which we had hired became overcrowded and a great deal of Stowell's time was spent in untangling ever recurrent snarls. We grew faster than we had expected and our clothes began to pinch.

Marks had a final interview with the firm which held tenaciously to their offices on our floor. He returned flushed and angry.

"Well?" I asked.

He grew still redder in the face. "They called us a damned lot of fly-by-night grocers and said that they needed our offices as badly as we need theirs."

"The fly-by-night part of it was a good tip," offered Stowell. "I wish we could."

"We'd better get that warehouse going as soon as we

can," said Marks more calmly. "We've waited too long as it is. But if we can bully Greenwood into it—— And it'll mean that we'll have to stop growing for a while."

Some recollection of his recent interview came to him

and he swore under his breath.

"Let them have them, then. Lucky thing we've got

those plans already drawn."

So we started our second period, that of the great warehouse up town. But still, with all its inconveniences, I like to look back on the Trumbull. It was grimy and small and cockroach-infested, but every day brought something new. The monotony of the later and greater days was a thing of the future. I like to remember the dingy old walls with their false paneling, the warped old inlaid floors—Stowell swore it was an imitation of oil cloth—the clank of the press across the court and the click of typewriters from the rooms along the dusky hallway—for every click and clank, so much done.

I remember long sessions of planning over the wall map of the city, dotted with colored pins showing stores established and projected; long sessions of planning, scheming and dreaming. It was all good, even to the rusty old elevator which bore us up and down, always starting with a jerk, like a tired old horse flicked with the whip, forever threatening to die between floors—and never doing it.

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To recall these memories is like reviewing a traveled road. The impressions of the first few miles are clearer and sharper than those which come after the senses are dulled by fatigue. Even so the impressions of the first few years of The Stores are clearer than those of the later and greater days.

These were the Great Days of Little Things. It was a time of engrossment in trifles, of testing and rejection, of incessant search for the best and simplest methods of

doing business. Every small trouble was big to us then, big because in its solution lay the solution of greater troubles later on. The three Mother Stores were laboratories in which we tested out our theories, changing, readjusting, discarding sometimes, but always working toward the inevitable formula.

During the later years of The Stores I used to look back on these first days as a sort of Heroic Age. Seen through the mists of distance the three of us appeared as supermen, always building well and wisely, never faltering in purpose, forever judging and disposing with superior wisdom. But now I see that we were only two ordinary young men and a middle aged man, after all. We made mistakes, many mistakes; we disregarded advice, flew in the face of common sense, failed to see the most obvious truths until we were clubbed into seeing—and came through it safely after all. That is now my main source of wonder.

We were very fortunate. Our good fortune came not only in that we got more than our share of the "breaks" of the game, but in the way the right people came to us at the right time. We were favored of the gods. Jimmy Golderick had a run-in with Hatherly, threw up his job and came over to us. A friend of Stowell's drifted in and revolutionized our purchasing system before he tired of New York and drifted out again. Miss Davenant came, first as an occasional stenographer from the agency around the corner, later, at Stowell's suggestion, as a regular member of the staff. She was—and is—wonderful in all ways. Our files became files instead of disorderly accumulations and Marks bellowed helplessly when he misplaced a requisition sheet. She stayed with us six years and each year became more indispensable; she graduated from typist to statistician to advertising expert—those little topheavy figures which featured the later advertising of The Stores were her creation—until finally she graduated out of The Stores entirely.

We expanded and prospered. Marks took a place out in Connecticut and acquired a motor. Stowell and I financed the rebuilding of the old rooms on the lower West Side, just above the wholesale district. Worthington suggested it, I think, I planned it, and Stowell carried it out. McCollom sat about and told the world how much better he would do it. For a while we lived in a wilderness of plaster and torn-out partitions, but gradually order came out of chaos. There was one large room across the front with a fireplace, long hidden beneath plaster and now brought to light, across one end; there was a long window seat beneath the low row of casements which looked out over a jumble of roofs and a distant glimpse of the river. In the rear were four chambers and a box of a kitchen, presided over by Skip, now emancipated from scrubbing and installed as joint valet, occasional cook and grand custodian of the dust rag.

We refurnished and redecorated, Worthington contributing startling examples of modern art and the rest of us following our own bents. McCollom contributed nothing save sundry decorations of a purely temporary character in the shape of wearing apparel strewn about the living room. He was a great deal of a nuisance. I had sent down from Whitehaven some of the best of my daubs and the old model of a frigate that had stood on the book case at home. "The Pirate Barque," Worthington insisted on calling her, and regaled our visitors with bloody tales of the slaver of which he swore she was a model.

"That's why Coffin is so mysterious and broody," he would whisper. "Black ivory, you know; foundation of the family fortune. They say that at times—shhh! here he is!" And the unsophisticated visitor would gaze on me with awe, as a man accursed and haunted.

### CHAPTER THE FOURTH

I

THE warehouse was Stowell's work. Our expansion ceased during the building of this central ganglion and he came in to supervise the construction. He enjoyed dealing again with the clean actualities of concrete and steel; in fact, we all took a deal of pleasure in it. Even Greenwood and Lyons were faintly pleased, although they made the inevitable objections to the expense.

I remember particularly one day when we inspected the nearly completed building—Sunday it must have been, for there were no workmen around. We wandered about, Stowell acting as guide. We inspected the shipping rooms on the first floor, and, in vision, saw the arcade at one end filled with rows of trucks.

"Motor trucks, when they get through experimenting with 'em," said Marks. "Notice how they've just copied horse trucks, high seat and all?"

We passed on, climbing half completed stairs and rough ladders, to the office floor above. We paused there a while, surveying the vast expanse of flooring with the three rows of stubby pillars, the batteries of elevators at either end, the sprouts and indications of partitions that would later divide one department from another. Above that was the warehouse proper, three floors with webs of steel truckways converging on the elevators.

Marks looked wise over some blueprints on a rough table. Stowell explained to me, in words of one syllable, that the scrolls and whorls of whitewash on the windows were not evidence of delicacy and desire for privacy on the part of the builders. "So they won't mistake glass for air and try to throw stuff through it," he explained. "It's as big as a drill hall, isn't it? We should have kept the old boat to run around in."

I agreed absently. This structure of concrete, steel and glass was the proof of success. This was permanent. The last of my fears vanished; this was an end of the doubts and presages of disaster which had oppressed me at our start.

"We're there," I said aloud.

"Forty ways," agreed Stowell, taking the phrase as lang.

"We've arrived, I mean. I've been afraid, but that's

over with. I'm convinced."

"Convinced of what?" interjected Marks.

"That we've succeeded."

"We have, after a fashion." He looked around, half satisfied and yet half frowning. "We've got a good foundation, if that's what you mean. We can start to do things now." He hummed absent-mindedly for a moment, his eyes fixed on some distant vision, then returned to his blue print.

Stowell looked at him with faint traces of amusement. "We can pay some attention to our people now, for one

thing," he advanced.

Marks challenged him with a glance. "For instance?" "Our responsibility to them doesn't end with the pay

envelope," Dick answered.

"You're still thinking of that educational stunt of yours, then," Marks asserted. "Well, there might be money in it. . . . As for this being the end—you're off your feed, Coffin."

I was conscious of my first feeling of distaste for The Stores. I was satisfied, in a way, with what we had built; Stowell and Marks saw my source of satisfaction only as a secure foundation for further structures. Still it was merely a momentary dissatisfaction, a swift and transient

blurring of the mirror. I had found the *Ultima Thule* of my ambitions; it hurt me to have these others consider it merely as a point of departure.

"Say," said Marks, looking up from the blue print. "Do you suppose that we could add a couple of wings, one at each end, some day?"

п

At that time I was unconscious of any flagging of my interest in The Stores. I realized, in a dim way, that Marks and Stowell had discovered new interests while I had not. But there was no apparent change in our relations. We worked together, as before. Perhaps Marks was a bit more self assertive than in the Trumbull days; perhaps Stowell was more engrossed in his own plans than in carrying out mine. I'm not sure. As I say, at this time I was only faintly aware of this shadow of personal failure that bordered our shining business success.

Marks, I know, became daily more aggressive, more sure of himself. He became staccato in his speech, abrupt—like Hatherly, in fact. I wonder if the habit of stenographic dictation is evolving a new manner of speech among us? With our success his emotions came nearer the surface; he abandoned the old suggestive, conciliatory method. "Nonsense!" became a favorite term of his.

Stowell also changed. His plans materialized in his school system.

"Carrying the Torch," he called it. During the latter days of the Trumbull period we had found difficulty in selecting men for promotion. We expanded rapidly, so rapidly that we lost personal touch with our employees. We made mistakes; flashy men—"morning-glories"—came to the top; we promoted on recommendation and suffered from the inevitable aftermath of wire-pulling and discontent. There was an intangible slackening in the

work, a subtle lack of interest which we recognized but

were unable to isolate. Stowell finally found it.

"The trouble is," he expounded, "that these people haven't the slightest idea what they're doing. They're mechanical. They know that they're selling stuff and keeping books, but they haven't the least idea why they're doing it or just where their work fits in the whole."

"Nine-tenths of them do just enough work to keep their

jobs," growled Marks.

"They need education," affirmed Stowell. "And I'm going to give it to them. I'm no LL. D. but I think I can swing it."

So he wrote his book, or rather he and McCollom compiled it. This was the first and last service McCollom did for us; soon after that he received a legacy of a few thousand and became editor of the Tri-County something or other out in Illinois and we saw no more of him.

The book was nothing more than a treatise on elementary economics, intermixed with a clear account of the conduct of The Stores and with illustrations drawn from that source. From first to last it was clear and concise, free from technicalities, very simple and yet illuminating. Marks frowned on it at first but was soon won over.

"We're not running a publishing house, Stowell," he

objected.

"But we are running a business," answered Dick, "and our success rests first and last on the interest our people show in it. They can't be interested in a thing unless they have at least a dim idea of what it's all about."

"How are you going to make them read it?"

"Conduct examinations. No promotions for any one until he understands what he's doing."

Marks was noncommittal.

"Merely a matter of creating ambition through understanding," explained Stowell. "Read it yourself; we can always learn something."

It brought the desired results. After that I think that there was a keener interest throughout the whole web; our people saw themselves as parts of the whole and not as fragments dropped at random. There is always a tendency for each man to make his particular position a "mystery"; to discourage those below him by putting on an air of importance. We did away with this. Men in general have a childish fear of the unknown; take away the mystery and they lose their fear.

As a supplement to this educational scheme Stowell and Miss Davenant started the weekly paper which was the final link in binding the loose structure of our stores together. It was a small affair of four pages, not so much a paper as a weekly report. There is a stimulus in seeing one's name in print which can be secured in no other way. This paper created a healthy rivalry between units and brought results in the form of increased sales. Marks

chuckled in delight.

i

This torch carrying reacted on Stowell. A department store down town awoke to the fact that we were getting results in a novel manner. Stowell was invited to explain. A Philadelphia publishing house sent over an investigator. Allardyce, of Columbia, offered suggestions based on theoretical sociology. After a time Stowell became expert in discussion of "fields"; he dripped odds and ends of sociological jargon. He developed a creditable platform presence, after some early failures, and became more deeply involved in spreading light. Marks viewed with alarm.

Then, lastly and inevitably, Stowell became a victim of the amateur welfare workers—these enthusiastic and sometimes misguided people who vicariously experience poverty by shifting their interest from society to society. He addressed Committees of Ten, Committees of One Hundred, Committees which were even more brazen in advertising their intent—Shopgirl's Leagues and Amelioration Associations of one sort or another. Sometimes weeks

passed with Stowell engaged for every afternoon and evening. Marks became disgusted.

"Off again?" he asked, with a touch of sarcasm in his

voice.

"Yours truly, Finnigin," answered Stowell briskly. He whistled to himself.

"And this time?" pursued Marks.

"Calpurnia Club. They thirst for information on our work."

"Important, no doubt?"

"Rather. Allardyce will be there," Stowell defended.

"I've no doubt but it's perfectly respectable," said Marks dryly. "You've settled this matter of the Eighth Avenue store?"

"Leave that to Conklin, can't you?" Stowell smiled uneasily as he caught Marks' accusing eye. "I know, I'm getting into this stuff pretty deep. That's the second time in a week I've shoved things off on Conklin."

"Perhaps Conklin appreciates his new responsibility,"

said Marks flatly. "I'm sure we don't."

Stowell was silent for a moment. "I'll be through at five o'clock," he offered finally. "Why can't you call for me on your way home? Bring Coffin and we'll decide that to-night."

Marks assented ungraciously. "We've got to take you

when we can get you, I suppose."

Stowell disregarded the implied complaint. "You know the place, don't you?" He named the town, a semi-fashionable suburb. "Call for me any time after five; I'll cut the talk short and then we'll have the whole evening to ourselves."

He swung out, vastly pleased with himself.

Marks voiced his complaint. "Calpurnia Club! A lot of women with nothing to take up their time, most likely. Loafers. I know the kind. They listen and you get a vote of thanks—and then they forget all about it. It's a

waste of time and I don't see why Stowell persists in it. Now if he'd get interested in something useful——"

"Like raising hogs?" I suggested.

"Like raising hogs," he assented. "You get some return out of that."

Some queer twist of revolt against ritualistic restraint had led Marks to turn ten acres of his Connecticut place into a model piggery. His sows and his motors were his sole interests outside The Stores.

"I've a good mind not to call for him after all," he meditated.

### ш

But we called for him, despite Marks' threat. We found the place after repeated inquiries along the road. It proved a converted dwelling house, evidently newly remodeled for the uses of a Civic Center.

"I wish there was some way of getting Stowell away from this stuff," complained Marks as we drew alongside the curb. He regarded the building morosely. "'Civic Center.' Huh! Huh! Going in? I'll wait here."

He snorted disapproval and started figuring on the back of an envelope.

I went in. A wooden faced colored maid in a neat apron regarded me with stolid suspicion. I explained my errand and was directed to double doors at the end of the hall. Through the oval glass I saw Stowell at the further end of the room. I retain an impression of scattered chairs, some forty of them at the further end of the room occupied by animate femininity, the nearer ones decorated with inanimate femininity in the form of furs. Stowell caught my accusing eye and glanced at his watch. Through the door I caught his muffled voice:

"-and so, in summary-"

He swept on to a brief conclusion, bowed, had his reward in a thin patter of gloved applause, and vanished in a side room. The chairwoman rose, a regal creature in shimmering black lace, evidently embarrassed by his abrupt conclusion.

"I'm sure that we owe Mr.—," she consulted her notes furtively, "—Mr. Stowell our thanks. I feel that he has illuminated matters for all of us. But since there is yet some time left——"

Amid a flutter and subdued buzz she went on to the discussion of finances and a projected series of readings. One of the women rose and came down through the scattered seats toward the door. She looked back as she came; something in her half averted profile seemed familiar. She stooped and caught up her furs, swung them over her arm and came on. I recognized Elizabeth.

She reached the swinging doors without seeing me; no doubt my face was only a blur behind the glass. She swung the door aside and stepped through. She looked up. Her furs slipped to the floor and I bent to recover them, the blood drumming in my temples. When I straightened again the look of blank surprise was gone. She smiled.

"Two ghosts in one day!" she said, and extended a slim hand. I mumbled something, I imagine. She surveyed me, her color returning. "First Dick and then you! Perhaps you're going to speak, too?"

I shook my head. "I came to get Stowell."

"You don't care about uplifting," she interpreted.

"Do vou?"

"Yes—and no," she considered. "We all have to look out for ourselves, you know. But it helps—and it's fashionable now." Then, abruptly, she swung to questioning. "Your—The Stores, was it? I've peeked into some of your places. It's been a success, then?"

"We're making money."

"Of course. But tell me about it."

I told her; that is, I spoke whatever fragments concerning The Stores came uppermost in my mind. It was

all utterly incomprehensible, I know. Yet Elizabeth kept up a running fire of comment—not comment, but catch phrases. "Really!" "How interesting!" She was astonished, pleased. "Fancy!" she commented frequently. Quite evidently alertness had become a pose with her.

"But I don't place you here," I said finally.

"We've been here nearly two years. You didn't know? The row Phil had with his uncle? We came here after that. But it's hard getting started."

I looked questions.

She shrugged her shoulders. "Making friends—preferably people with money. They invest." Her tone implied a certain cynicism. "But we do very well."

There was an air of boasting, of paraded success, in her tone. She broke off to smile brightly at a gray-haired, stately creature who rustled by us, arms filled with papers, bound on errands of great import. The stately woman thrawed slightly and vanished with a click of high heels.

"Mrs. Roberts," Elizabeth volunteered. "Her husband is Roberts and Company—wool, you know. I am on two committees with her."

I was duly impressed. Still, with all my soul, I wanted to get away, to run. Elizabeth shifted to a new line, doubtless suggested by Mrs. Roberts. She became deliberately lyrical about Learoyd's success. I listened mechanically. They had been abroad, I remember; there was mention of Pinehurst, of Tampa, of somebody's shack in the Adirondacks. I think now that she was deliberately cruel. At the time I was conscious only of the feeling that this was a bad dream and I would awake presently. This present Elizabeth was not the Elizabeth I had known. She was nervous; her gestures spoke of living at high tension. She was coarsened in grain, on the surface, at least. A subcurrent of cynicism was evident in all her talk. And it was quite evident that her boasting was only boasting, after all.

"But I was born to be discontented," I remember her saying. She must have realized the discrepancy between her success and her discontent.

Through the oval glass in the door Stowell appeared, at the further end of the auditorium. I welcomed his appearance as a relief from an intolerable situation.

"You wanted to see Stowell?" I asked. She followed

my gesture.

"Why, yes." The meeting had broken up and the chairwoman intercepted Stowell. He smiled and fidgeted nervously with his watch chain. Elizabeth turned and spoke decidedly. "No; not now. But if you'll bring him out some time—you must. Come yourself, at least. Here," and she gave me her card. "You will, won't you?"

She smiled appealingly.

"I'm afraid-"

"I'll not let Phil talk investments," she said quickly. "Please."

"Perhaps."

"That's no kind of a promise."

"I'll try."

"Do. Good-by."

She vanished as Stowell bumped the door on my heels. "Pardon—oh, it's you!" he said. "Come on. Some-

body nail you for a charity subscription?"
"Something in that line."

We neared Marks' place before I tore up the card that Elizabeth had given me and dribbled the fragments over the side of the car—unread.

I had no desire to see Elizabeth again. I regretted having seen her. To one of my temperament, disillusion is a physical pain. Elizabeth, buried in memory, had not turned to aureate earth. She was artificial, unreal, shallow.

I shook off the last fragments of her card and broke in on Marks' explanation of his figures. "You'll have to give up this uplift stunt of yours, Stowell," I said abruptly.

"Is that so? Why?"

"I'm thinking of going away for a while."

"Vacation? Go ahead," he advised generously.

Marks turned and regarded me, swaying to and fro with the lurching of the car. "That's one way," he conceded, "but——"

His approval or disapproval meant nothing to me. I was suddenly tired of work, tired of everything. This meeting of Elizabeth awoke in me no emotion save a vague

disgust with the entire business of life. . . .

My "vacation," in all, lasted three months. I remember it now as a blank period of formless unrest. I remember Chicago and a dreary autumn wind off the lake. I recall a succession of sleeping cars and resultant headaches. There was a week spent in investigating a system of chain stores in St. Louis and a vast accumulation of notes which ultimately went into the river as the train pulled slowly across. I wandered about, like a man in a stuffy, ill-ventilated room on a rainy day, gazing through blurred panes at the dripping world.

And I'm not sure whether or not Elizabeth had anything to do with this dingy discontent. I know that I was glad, after all, that we hadn't married. Glad, and yet dimly sorry. We seemed both to have turned out something different than we had promised. Perhaps to-

gether----

I was secretly relieved when Marks telegraphed hysterically for me to return.

IV

I came back to find the existence of The Stores threatened. Pingree, a protégé of mine, had copied our ideas, our organization, even our plans for further expansion. He had secured capital and started with four stores, with more in immediate prospect. Marks was frothily denunciatory of Pingree and his forbears to the fourth generation. He raved up and down the office, going off into occasional skyrocket ascents of language. Stowell watched him, faintly amused and yet apparently not agreeing.

Finally I understood and Marks came down to earth. "Well," he said briskly, "what are we going to do about

it?"

"Stop him, if we can," I said briefly. "What do you say, Stowell?"

"He has queer ideas, you know," volunteered Marks in elaborate courtesy. "Brotherhood of man—Pingree's divine right to do as he pleases—that sort of stuff."

It was evident that Stowell and Marks held differing opinions regarding Pingree.

"What do you say?" I reiterated.

Stowell turned from the window. "Marks seems to have stated my position," he said slowly. "I object—at present. You can't stop Pingree from getting a start; it's too late for that. And before you start a fight—well, I advise that you investigate."

Marks hesitated a moment, started to voice an objec-

tion, and then agreed.

"But take my word for it," he stated, "we've got to fight and that's all there is to it. We can't dodge it."

V

We found out a good deal during the next week. Marks and I had an interview with Pingree which ended by all three of us losing our tempers. What irritated me was the fact that Pingree had made decided improvements on some of my best ideas. Couple that with the man's air of superiority and coolness and you see that we had sufficient cause for high words. I have a suspicion that Pingree had some hidden grudge against us. Or per-

haps his idea of being competitive was being brutally discourteous. Certainly he made no attempt at conciliation.

"Then you're quite determined to buck us, are you?"

asked Marks finally.

Pingree rose and stretched. "If you demand a positive answer—yes. We're going to wipe you right off your little map and then burn the map."

Then Marks went off in a pyrotechnic display of profanity and I got him away as soon as possible. Marks

in a temper was scarcely a dignified object.

We had a grand pow-wow over it that afternoon, made our decision and started our fight—started our side of it, for Pingree had already begun. Stowell still held out for conciliation.

"I know," he said. Marks had stated that we must either fight or be content with half success. "That's

your view of it. You may be right."

"I am right," affirmed Marks. "If we don't bust them, they'll bust us. There's no middle ground. Either speed up and get ahead—or eat dust. Wipe us off the map, will he! We can do a little of that ourselves. It'll mean a loss; we'll have to disregard expense. But it's going to be expensive, either way."

He swung to and fro, trying to face both of us at once. "Now or later?" he asked. "Let them get a start and we'll have the same trouble to meet over and over again. We can't afford to let them get started."

"There's a third way that you haven't mentioned," said Stowell.

"What's that?"

"To let them get established and then buy them out. You say that their plan is almost the same as ours—why not let them do the work for us and then take their pay? I—hang it all, I'm against this war-to-the-knife stuff; I've never liked it and never will. It's contrary to my sense of business ethics; I believe in giving the other fellow a fair chance. It's as you say, I suppose. But we've got

no patent on our ideas and—well, I honestly believe that we'd better let them go." He was genuinely distressed

at the prospect of conflict.

"I don't like it any more than you do," replied Marks. "It's dirty, for one thing, and for another it's expensive—damned expensive. But follow your idea to its logical conclusion. You'd let this Pingree get established. Well and good. What then? We'd either have to buy him out—and pay seven prices, even supposing we could buy him out—we could consolidate with him—which would mean a radical change in our plans—or we could give up our plans entirely. If you could show me any other way out—but there isn't any. No. It's his fight and we can't dodge it."

"Don't be a confounded Copperhead, Stowell," I ob-

jected.

He stared for a moment and then caught the allusion. "'Let the erring sisters depart in peace'?" he inquired. "That hardly applies. They're not erring sisters."

"It's the same spirit," I answered. "Non-resistance—the sacred rights of others and the rest of that junk. It's

Chinese philosophy."

Marks contributed something about "bastard children." But he rather surprised me by the patience with which he met Stowell's arguments; for my part I could see no sense in them. Pingree had originated nothing. He was merely using our own weapons against us; why shouldn't we fight? Stowell was right in one thing; business warfare was essentially dirty with no trace of anything honorable about it. But like many disagreeable things, it was necessary. I could see no other course open to us. Neither could Marks. And Stowell finally gave in.

"Well, which is it?" I asked impatiently. "You're talk-

ing in circles. I'm for smashing them, myself."

"Smash," voted Marks.

We both looked at Stowell. "Fight, then," he said. "I'll do my best."

VI

So it started. It was a bitter war, all that Marks had prophesied; a war with the traditional features of raids. reprisals, propaganda and the inevitable protests and profits of neutrals. Altogether it lasted a year and more. During that time we went through the travail of reorganization; we fought Pingree and fought among ourselves; we had endless trouble with Greenwood and Lyons; we went through alternating triumphs and defeats, hesitated for a while on the brink of failure, and finally emerged stronger than before, free forever from the bugbear of competition. It left us all changed. Marks throve on the fight and found new ambitions. Stowell did his share. as he had promised, but did it without enthusiasm. The very form and purpose of The Stores changed. I crowded five years' work into one. And I had once gone about Whitehaven with a plan for the elimination of competition! We were eliminating competition, but not exactly in the way I had planned then.

We speeded up in every department. In four months our advertising expenses quadrupled; other expenses increased in proportion. We drained our established stores of their best men, abandoned our plans for slow and sure expansion and made the crushing of Pingree our one object. At first we were content to follow his lead; later we anticipated his moves. We had our spy system as well as he. For a while Pingree met us, forcing the fight, in fact. Any lingering compunctions which I might have entertained about the justice of our course were jettisoned when he cut prices below cost.

"Trying to bluff us, eh?" grunted Marks. "We'll see

him and go him one better."

We did. For a time the two campaigns—that of establishing new places and cutting prices—went on side by side. Pingree weakened first on price cutting; we went a shade below him and rested there.

But before Pingree showed this preliminary sign of defeat, Greenwood and Lyons went back on us-quit cold. For three months and more they had bothered us, prying about singly and together questioning, objecting, offering futile suggestions and gradually progressing from doubt through successive stages of disapproval to final and utter panic. We were spending too much money; they hinted darkly that the whole Middle West was behind Allison, Pingree's backer; they demanded compromise where compromise was manifestly impossible and out of the question. They-"went Jewish," as the Russians call Hebraic hysteria. They wasted an entire week of our time with alternate cajolings and blustering. Through some channel they learned that Stowell was not in complete sympathy with our steam roller tactics; as a last resort they tried to swing him over-without result. And in a final desperation they agreed to sell out their interest if we could find a purchaser.

Marks found one. He did more; still keeping the control in the hands of the three of us he obtained funds to carry on the fight indefinitely. I think that it was a short note written under a certain letterhead and signed with a great sprawling signature which caused Allison to draw in his horns. That note—and I am convinced that it was written at Marks' suggestion—changed the complexion of affairs. I saw Pingree a week after that and pitied him for the first time.

That was really the end, perhaps not the end but certainly the turning point. Greenwood and Lyons tried to hedge on their agreement. The name on the letterhead was guarantee that their appraisal of our success was false. They never quite forgave Marks; I think that to this day they look upon our entire year of trouble as a scheme to force them out of The Stores. They never forgot.

#### VII

This business warfare affected us all in one way or another, as I have said, but its effects are things apart from this chapter. I shall have to come back to them later. Now that I am upon this thread of our development from far reaching plans to a no less expansive reality I wish to stay on it, to follow it to the end, and then come back to what is, after all, the main thread of my story.

It seems but a step, as I look back on it, from our office at the warehouse to our final quarters on lower Broadway. In reality it was a matter of years. After our recovery from the Pingree incident we filled in our territory rapidly. As we grew, the growth of the purely local section of the warehouse became a serious inconvenience.

We had, to quote Marks, "no more privacy than a push cart man." We moved down town again, this time to offices of our own.

This was the shell we never outgrew, the final stage to which all the rest was but preliminary. There was nothing small about our projects now. We worked on matters which we had realized but dimly at first, things which had been only provisional possibilities. We had built up from the strata of everyday business into the rarefied atmosphere above. We received the final accolade—we and the men of our subordinate companies were referred to as "The Grocery Crowd." We never reached the skytowering heights of the other "crowds"—railroads and steel and rubber and the others; ours was one of the minor pinnacles which pass unnoticed because of their proximity to these greater peaks.

And there was nothing small about our headquarters. In our new offices we achieved something of that somber richness which should accompany the working out of great things.

We had the entire tenth floor of the new building-

two floors, in fact, for the first break in the upward sweep came here and what was really the eleventh floor was included in our office. We had our own ideas of what we wanted and these two floors gave us the chance to work them out in the great central office which Townsend, the architect, at first declared impossible and afterward referred to with pride. It was an office of hushed ecclesiastical atmosphere, of indirectly-lit vaults overhead, of solidity and spaced rows of desks; an office deeply resonant with the muffled hum of the worshipers at the Shrine. The Shrine itself—so christened by Worthington—was a duplication of the old wall map, a vast expanse of buff and soft blue with the network of The Stores picked out in glowing red and deeper blue.

It comes back to me, as a detail of the furnishing of our own inner offices, that Marks developed a hobby for collecting figures of elephants; little elephants in bronze and ivory stood on his desk; elephants peered from the corners in all sizes and attitudes, trumpeting, waving branches and standing in serene immobility. One of these larger figures, carved from a great block of ebony and with deep-set twinkling eyes of some red stone, proved the downfall of many of the men who came to us with propositions; the head and tail and even the eyes were actuated by some hidden mechanism and I have seen many carefully thought out schemes break down and show their inner weaknesses under the subtle and distracting influ-"Old Genghis Khan," as Marks called ence of this beast. him, did us good service many times with his rolling little eyes and twitching tail and nodding head. When we adopted a seal he had the place of honor on it; he was the original of the black elephant on the buff and blue background which has since become familiar as the stamp of our products.

This office, with its quiet soberness and its exotic elephantine figures, was the heart of everything in these days. Into it flowed the revenue of all our subsidiary branches; we dipped out what we pleased and turned it into new channels. It was the center of two webs; the network of The Stores and this other web, supplementary but of scarcely less importance, which we were weaving.

In time the weaving of this supplementary web became our main interest. At first the management of The Stores was the sole business carried on from the new office, but in time it became a subordinate interest, although we never gave it up entirely. We followed out steadily our policy of training up men to do our work and passed on ahead, reaching out, grasping, turning over the details to the men who followed us—and then reaching out for more.

We became manufacturers, as well as wholesalers and retailers. We pushed our own products, the familiar Buff and Blue brands of canned and cartoned stuff. Later we incorporated our specialties under General Canneries and Corn Products and in a measure relaxed control of them. Altogether, in the last days, there were between twenty and thirty of these minor companies, each a thriving business in itself, under our control. Our hold on them became even more indirect during the first days of the Sherman Anti-Trust frenzy, but to the last a large proportion of their profits flowed into the general offices. . . .

This second web was entirely Marks' work, as the initial conception of the first web was mine.

There is one point which becomes clearer to me as I survey these greater days of The Stores. I see Marks as the dominating figure in The Stores. My part—and Stowell's too, until he left us—was subordinate. I was a burned out battery, a drag on the wheels. From directing and in a measure controlling, I slipped back and became a cog in the machinery. I still evolved ideas, but they came mechanically. And they were failures. I never quite got hold of the larger aspects of Marks' schemes. The Brazilian coffee scheme was my best effort

during this time. It ended in abject failure. I put through the San Jacinto irrigation project and as a result involved The Stores in endless litigation. After these abortive attempts at leadership I gave it up and followed Marks.

I must have changed in other ways. Perhaps I have never been noted as the possessor of a bright and smiling face, but—I remember passing a knot of typists, at lunch hour. One of them held forth on some grievance.

"Gloomy Gus!" she said. "On the level, Gertie, if you

stuck a pin in that man he'd bleed ink!"

Some one nudged her and she looked up in open mouthed horror. I had no doubts as to the identity of "Gloomy Gus."

But I am not going into these later days of The Stores. That is Marks' story and not mine. He developed amazingly as time went on; he absorbed Stowell's practicality and my imaginative quality, made them his own and surpassed us both. He became self-sufficient.

He dominates all my memories of these later days, always reaching out and grasping, always building and piling up and adding, and always growing as the second

web grew under his hands.

1

So far this has been a story of growth, interrupted at times, but still steadily progressing against all obstacles and sometimes against all sense. I have traced the growth of my imagination and the growth of The Stores, the child of that imagination. Now another element enters, an element which I have discovered since I began to write.

This new element is that of decay. I began to break away from The Stores; not so much a breaking away as a slow and gradual loss of interest. I never broke away entirely. It was a loss so slow and gradual that even now I fail to see it clearly; it is difficult to tell exactly when growth ceased and decay started. I have been setting down all sorts of inconsequential things, trying to produce order from them and determine just where my grip began to relax. I find it very hard. I know that Stowell lost interest at the time of our unfortunate fight with Pingree; I know that Marks never lost interest. I can see these things in others but not in myself. I must have grown and decayed at the same time, as a tree grows and is sound to all outward appearances but is still rotten at heart.

I am not sure, but I think that the decay started with the very beginning of The Stores. Until the doors of our first three stores opened they had been no more than a mere mental conception; as they assumed the aspect of reality my attitude toward them underwent a change. There is at once a satisfaction and a disappointment in seeing the creations of our imagination take on substance. My attitude toward The Stores changed again when we

moved from the Trumbull to the warehouse; I had feared failure before that, and with this assurance of success that fear and incentive to work was removed. I changed for a third time with our removal to lower Broadway.

One thing is clear; I shall have to go back to pick up this thread of decay; I have carried the story of growth beyond the inception of my loss of interest. But I shall go back no further than the end of our fight with Pingree. Stowell left us during the year following that, and with his going came my first self-examination and dissatisfaction. The decay was present before that, but it was hidden so deeply that I failed to suspect its presence. That was its first appearance, and even then I failed to recognize it as decay.

I

It started pleasantly enough; that is, it was pleasant for others. We all dislike to be laughed at, and I still blush when I think of the part I played that afternoon.

It began in Miss Davenant's office. We had been planning some new economy—we cut expenses enormously after the rout of Pingree—and despite my efforts I found my attention wandering from the straight line of business. Finally I found the cause, a most magnificent ring on Theresa's hand, a ring whose stone flashed little darts of red and blue fire and in some subtle way distracted my attention from the subject at hand.

"That's it," I said conclusively.

"That's—what?" she asked, surprised at this sudden side remark.

"Your ring," I explained. "Dazzled me. Would you mind turning the stone inside?"

She stretched her hand out into the sunlight which slanted down beside her desk and waved it to and fro slowly; tiny shafts of crimson and beryl and sapphire shimmered and danced across the scattered papers.

"A beauty, isn't it?" she observed with a little laugh in her voice.

"Not a very good investment," I observed sagely. "You never get back what you pay for them. Now then—"

As I closed the door behind me, she laughed; a full throated laugh which was a rarity in our busy atmosphere. I listened, started back, and then thought better of it. Probably a touch of hysteria, I thought; she had been under a strain lately and had shown it in an unusual absent-mindedness.

"Poor investment!" I said to myself. "You poor idiot! No wonder she laughed."

I started out with some dim notion of apologizing, but Stowell met me at the door with a worried look and some minor difficulty and I turned back.

"I see," he said thoughtfully, after I had found his trouble. "Sorry to have interrupted you. Go ahead; I'll stay here and get it down while it's fresh in my mind."

Where had I been going? Something—Miss Davenant, I remembered.

"We're going to lose Theresa, I'm afraid," I observed. "So?" He went on scribbling, singularly unmoved.

"Got an engagement ring; just noticed it," I continued. "Uh-huh. Known it for some time."

"It's going to be hard to replace her," I went on irritably. "That's the worst of having a woman in a responsible position. Some weak-chinned counter-jumper always interferes and takes them away."

"You know the man, then?" queried Stowell.

"No-but these capable women always marry that

type," I asserted dogmatically. "Protective instinct, I

suppose.

Stowell wrote on, mumbling to himself. Without warning he exploded in a sudden fit of coughing; he grew red behind the ears and bolted out without bothering to shut my door. I heard Theresa's office door open; through the ground glass partition I saw dim shadows and heard the two of them talking. They laughed; she had probably told him of my absurd mistake. I had made myself ridiculous enough, I thought, and bent over my work again.

I looked up again to see them standing together in the

doorway.

"I owe you an apology——" I began, but they paid no attention.

"Are we alone?" Theresa asked, looking up at Dick.

Stowell looked around, shading his eyes with one hand. "There's Coffin," he pointed out.

"Where? Oh, yes!" and she deliberately looked through me. "But he's totally blind, you know. Come."

She tilted her head back, Dick bent over toward her lips, lower—lower—

"You—you——" I stammered weakly, and they jumped

apart in exaggerated surprise.

"Why, look!" exclaimed Theresa. "His eyes are open!"

"Open?" laughed Dick. "You could hang your hat on them!"

"You-you-" I said again.

They went off into a shameless burst of laughter, pointing at me and rocking to and fro each time I attempted to speak.

"Let's see if Marks is blind too," said Dick finally. They went off, still laughing at me and leaving me still

speechless.

They were married soon after this, a quiet wedding in the apartment which Theresa shared with her invalid mother; a ceremony whose main incidents seem now to be the wrangle I had with the caterer and the fact that Dick misplaced his shirt studs and had to borrow mine. I borrowed Worthington's, and he in turn annexed a set which were the pride of Skip's heart. The cuff-links in particular were magnificent, one solid blaze of red and green glass, and Worthington missed the best parts of the ceremony in his endeavors to keep them concealed.

Marks was there, for once obviously ill at ease and manifesting a desire to get me off into a corner and discuss the details of the Corn Products deal which we were considering at that time. I finally shunted him off on a militantly strong-minded aunt of the bride's, a severely dressed lady of uncertain years and very positive ideas on the subject of the relations between employer and employed. She cornered Marks behind the piano, and from time to time I caught phrases about "our movement" in tones which indicated that all other movements were of dubious and inferior character indeed. Marks gazed at me gloomily and reproachfully over the polished top of the piano, and the next day he was unnecessarily harsh to an inoffensive being in a white tie and squaretoed boots who invaded our office on behalf of some uplift stunt.

Worthington and I saw them off from the pier at Hoboken on the Wilhelm der Grosse; she sailed at midnight, and as she swung slowly out from the circle of the docklights, Theresa's voice floated down to us from the blurred mass along the rail, high above us in the dimness.

"No rings, Mr. Coffin," she called. "They're a bad investment."

"What did she mean?" asked Worthington curiously, as we turned away.

"Damned if I know," I answered grumpily, and refused to respond to any of his further advances. He was very noisy and bothersome as we crossed on the ferry, gesticulating in arcs of red and green cuff buttons toward the dim lights of the Kaiser Wilhelm and asserting enviously that Stowell was a lucky dog. He was to be married himself that fall, but a honeymoon in Europe was beyond his reach.

I agreed with Worthington on one thing.

"It's going to be lonesome without Stowell," he said.

#### ш

During that winter my father died. He had been in poor health for a long time, although no hint of it had crept into his letters, and had gradually given up the

management of his store to Joe Grigsby.

My memories of the funeral are very confused. I remember Captain Waldron, a bit more stooped and aged; I recall the unfamiliar whisper and rustle which filled the old house; clearest of all comes the picture of the procession through the snow-strewn streets to the old burying ground, the burying ground which had more tombstones than graves, for many of the monuments were erected to those lost at sea.

Last of all I remember the next morning at the store with Captain Waldron and Grigsby. Joe was worried, and yet reluctant to speak of business at such a time. I broached the subject myself and made arrangements for him to continue as manager. Some sentimental consideration prevented me from selling outright.

"And the house, Johnny?" queried Captain Waldron

from behind the stove.

"I don't know, sir," I said slowly. "What would you advise?"

"Keep it."

"I may never come back here to live."

"Been in the family a long time," he reminded me.

"Yes, it has."

I thought a moment.

"I'll leave it in your hands, sir," I concluded. "Keep

it in repair and send me the bills. Board up the windows, if you wish. Or better still, rent it to some widow or old maid; there must be some of them about town. Get enough out of it to pay the taxes and other expenses. No more. I don't need the money and they may. Will you?"

"Well done," he commented, "I'll see to it."

He thoughtfully considered the rust spotted stove; then nodded.

"He'd like it that way, I know," he said.

#### IV

Stowell's honeymoon lengthened out to a six months' absence, a period punctuated by infrequent post cards from queer corners of Europe and still more infrequent letters. Finally he and Theresa returned and set about the furnishing of an apartment in the upper eighties, just back from Riverside Drive. Dick was strangely reluctant to take up the thread of business again; he came in once or twice, criticized our work, yawned over his desk and then vanished for another period. I objected. We needed him.

"One thing at a time," he protested. "I'm over my cars in work as it is. Solemn business, this starting a home. See here, what I've got to do to-day."

He pulled out a long list and began to read; decorator, a curio dealer on Third Avenue to be seen about some andirons, rugs, meet Theresa for lunch at 12.30, Customs House—"Fuss over some Grand Rapids furniture," he commented—maid, curtains, con. c. b.——

"Now what the devil is 'con. c. b.'?" he worried.

I led him quietly outside and closed the door.

Finally Marks and I were invited to inspect the finished work.

"You have done well," said Marks, after dinner that

night. "With such direction, of course, failure was impossible."

He bowed gravely to Theresa and she bobbed him a

quaint little curtsy in return.

"System does wonders, doesn't it?" she remarked.

"And now I suppose you'll be coming back to the office, Stowell," Marks said after a pause. "We've been saving part of this matter of the Canneries for you—and then there's the new office to be considered."

"I know," agreed Dick. "Playtime's over; nothing left but the cold gray respectability of married life. But it's

been fun."

"All of that," said Theresa. "You've no idea the things we've seen! Little English villages—"

"Like Whitehaven, only slower," commented Dick.

"—With thatched roofs and funny chimney-pots and——"

"-Mud floors, most likely."

"He's dreadfully unromantic," complained Theresa.

"But still, it will seem dull at the office, I suppose," I ventured.

There was a little silence.

"The office?" said Theresa, with a little sigh. "You're quite determined to talk business, I see. I refuse to listen. I'm only a poor, weak woman and I don't understand these things."

Despite our protests she marched out.

"I don't know," said Stowell, gazing after her. "It will be hard to settle down again, after being away so long. Hard work. I hate to think of it."

He sighed contemplatively, and became engrossed in the end of his cigar.

"So I don't think that I'll come back," he added quietly.

I looked at Marks.

"I told you," he nodded.

"But why, Dick?" I asked. "You aspire to be one of the idle rich? or is it some new line of business?" "The second."

"Something new?"

"Absolutely."

"But what?"

"I suppose you'd class it roughly as Uplifting the Peepul—welfare work," he answered, "although really——"

"You mean poking around in tenements and blackmail-

ing respectable people to support pet charities?"

He shook his head.

"Not that—although I maintain that it's all right in its own way, mind you. I'm not interested in charities save in a purely academic manner—which is a polite way of saying that I don't care a damn. I shall not interfere with Mrs. Mulcahy when she feeds the baby Sky Blue Milk instead of Peptonized Lacteal Tablets. Neither do I care whether Tony Guardanolupo buys white wine or red steak with his princely stipend."

"That narrows it down somewhat," I observed. "You admit that you're going tilting at windmills and you've eliminated one class. Suppose you point out the specific

object of your wrath."

"The biggest one of all," he returned cheerfully. "But

I'm not the only Quixote in the field."

"Allardyce, Watson and Dalrymple, to name some of the others," volunteered Marks from the depths of his chair. "They've touched me for funds," he added, in response to Dick's questioning glance.

Dick raised his eyebrows.

"They got them," Marks admitted.

"Good!" commented Dick. "I'm glad that you approve of it."

"My approval is—purely academic," said Marks dryly. "You know more than I thought you did, Marks."

"Thanks," said Marks dryly. "Others have told me

that."

I listened sulkily, without the least idea what they were

I listened sulkily, without the least idea what they were talking about.

"It's just this," said Dick, taking pity on my ignorance. "There are a few men in this village who have a suspicion that public business isn't conducted exactly as it should be. I'm one of them; besides myself there's Allardyce of Columbia, Dalrymple, the railroad man—I think you've heard of him—Ellms, you neglected to mention him, Marks——"

"Don't know him," grunted Marks.

"About a dozen of us in all. I'm only a minor member; it's my opinion that they came to me after they'd tried every one else. But I'm with them. We're of the firm and unalterable opinion that there's no reason under the sun why public business should be conducted less efficiently and less honestly than private business. In support of this contention we intend to see whether or not we can put this city on a firm and sane governmental basis. I won't say that we will—but we'll try. That is our wind-mill, the windmill of municipal waste. There's only one larger one—the problem of waste in national government—and that's too large for us. Later—perhaps. We'll have to find out how big this city problem is, first."

"Business administration," I commented. "Red fire—statistics—cart-tail oratory on the East Side with an obligato of dead cats—and after election a statement that we will renew the fight next year.' And by next year you'll have forgotten about it."

Dick laughed and turned to Marks. "See where your money is going," he said. "Do you want it back?"

"Not yet," answered Marks. "Go on."

"You have the wrong idea, Coffin," continued Dick. "We shall run no candidate for mayor nor for councilman nor for fence viewer. This is an affair of government, not politics. Two entirely distinct matters. Don't you comprehend that government is a matter of ideas, not of men? We have nothing against any party or any man; our objection is to the fact that the administration of

public affairs is still in the Dark Ages. You can't deny it. Duplication of work, departments which overlap and interfere, waste, incompetence, things going undone because no one knows how to do them—you'll find the city rotten with all these. That's what we're gunning for, the system and not the man. You think our idea is to get into City Hall; you're wrong. We want to help the men who are already there. And we can do that best by substituting or trying to substitute business methods for archaic survivals of the day when Broadway was lined with shade trees and the Bowery was respectable. That's all."

"And your method?" asked Marks from the shadows. "That's undecided as yet," admitted Dick, "but roughly I should say that there will be four steps. First, to get a general view of the problem. Second, to get inside and get information. Third, to formulate and recommend changes, and last, to see that our recommendations go through and are tried out. That will be the start; later all four steps will go on at once. Twenty years ago even the first would have been impossible; to-day—well, we have hopes of being heard."

"Hopes," emphasized Marks.

"I have my own fears," acknowledged Dick. "But that's still in the future. The whole thing simmers down to just this; we have done things big and now we must do things well. In The Stores we've done both, because we started from the very bottom; in government we've had growth without order. We have no remedy which is to solve all our difficulties; we merely want to refine existing material. 'Welfare Work'—yes; but of a pretty high order I think."

"Your general plan-"

"Is just this," interrupted Dick. "How much do these cost you at the office?"

He held up a bundle of common pencils.

"Seven cents, I think," answered Marks doubtfully.

"I paid ten for these," commented Dick, "at a stationery store."

"Well?"

"And they cost the city eighteen."

Marks turned the bundle over in his fingers.

"I see," he said thoughtfully.

"And you?"

"I've heard much the same thing in Park Row during the lunch hour," I admitted. "But now—it seems more convincing. It will take a long time, Dick."

"I know it."

"And how much do you know about it?"

Theresa came into the room again; her protested horror of business had been only a pretext.

"Only what we could learn in six months," he answered.

"A nice honeymoon I had," she said indignantly. "Dragging around through municipal workshops and prisons and dock-yards and talking with fat and uninteresting officials."

"Instead of looking at scenery and the moon and—ouch!"

"No tale-telling," she warned.

"But we can't spare you now," I objected.

"I think you can. How about it, Marks?"

"We'll have to stumble along as best we can," answered Marks. "You seem quite determined. Although if you ever need a job——"

Dick laughed. "If I ever go broke I'm going to start a pencil factory, believe me. There's money in it."

They seemed to take it all quite cheerfully.

"Cheer up," said Dick, "this isn't the end of the world, you know."

I knew; but he had started me thinking, and my thoughts were not pleasant ones.

v

I shall remember that walk down town as long as I live. I declined Marks' offer of a lift in his car and struck out alone. I wanted to think.

I remember turning toward Riverside Drive first, because Marks went the other way. For a while I gazed out over the river, across to the black mass of the Palisades, tormented by a thousand fruitless questions. I recall two cruisers at anchor upstream, two dim shadows against the dull shimmer of the stream, picked out here and there with yellow lines of dotted light. In the yards below me a switching engine crept about, coughing apologetically but insistently, in search of some car which had fallen into bad company. I searched my mind for answers to the questions which perplexed me. I failed to find them, and in sheer restlessness turned away from the river and started south.

Some sort of an affair was going on in one of the residences opposite; awning out to the curb, a hum of music from within, a string of motors down a side street, all the usual external evidences that some one was passing through a social crisis. Dick and I had wandered up here one Sunday during the early days of The Stores and amused ourselves by picking out the places we would buy some day. A few more years at the present rate and even this would be within my reach. Not that I wanted it or ever had wanted it, but I could if I wished.

I found no satisfaction in the thought. I found myself in the position of a man who has spent his life in hewing and carving a statue and then finds that he can neither sell it, eat it, nor put it to any conceivable use.

The joy of creation? A poor substitute for other things, and a source of satisfaction which diminished as the work went on. I had enough to eat, enough to wear, a roof over my head—and the joy of creation. The poorest laborer had as much, and more. Then why go on

creating? The pleasure of transmuting ideas into realities had left me; what incentive was left? Not money; I had never found pleasure in mere possession. Then why go on? Why? For the first time in years I put that question to myself; it recurred in my mind like a refrain as I went along.

I crossed over, struck across Amsterdam and Columbus Avenues, and bore south along the Park. To the left, now hidden behind the rough knolls and now revealing themselves in flashes between the trees, I remember the glitter and spin of hurrying lights on Fifth Avenue; behind me there hung a shadow, a shadow in a greasy hat and broken shoes, a shadow with a furtive air and a patter of misfortune.

"Go to hell!" I growled over my shoulder.

It hung back and hesitated. Under a sudden impulse I turned and beckoned.

"Here," I ordered, and emptied my change pocket into the battered hat; part of it trickled through and the wreck grunted and wheezed after the scattered coins. I found a bill wadded in the corner of one pocket and flicked it down toward the groping hands.

"Now, damn you, you've got to walk," I thought.

I was childishly angry with myself; I had a blind and unreasoning impulse to hurt my body, to make myself suffer.

I glanced back; the battered hat had vanished into the shadows whence it came. We were both of one stamp, I thought; both members of the Itinerant Brotherhood. All my life I had been a tramp, an intellectual tramp, forever seeking new things, exhausting their possibilities, and passing on. There had been a satisfaction in that, at one time; but now only the habit remained. I still wove my dreams but there was no delight in the smoothness of the product; the intricate pattern and the sheen of mixed colors held no more beauty for me. And to go on weaving—endlessly—Why?

I left Columbus Circle behind me and turned into Broadway; I elbowed my way through a crowd craning their necks at a great, lumbering car drawn alongside the curb. I thought of Marks, who had early grown wise in horse-power and speed. Power. That was his aim and with that he was satisfied. It was a part of his nature, this ever-narrowing acquisition of money and power. But—was he narrow? He had known of Stowell's plans, while I had not. He had other interests beside business; so had Stowell. Had I?

I thought I had. The new office, our extension, this deal of the Canneries, all our plans of future conquests—I stopped there.

Lump them all under one head—business—and what had I outside?

Nothing.

I had fallen behind the others; Marks, Stowell, even Worthington had outdistanced me. They had other interests in life; I had nothing but work. A moment before I had thought contemptuously of Marks and his single-minded lust for power; now I thought contemptuously of myself. I lacked even that object.

Times Square, with its blaze of lights, the crush of theater goers, and the glittering double vista down Seventh Avenue and Broadway. "Longacre Square," old Jenkins had called it, and had given me a long and wandering account of it in the late seventies. I had been bored, and had yawned in his face. I wondered now if he had noticed it. Probably he had, but he was always pathetically glad of the chance to talk to some one. Would I be like that, twenty years from now? No interests but business—and old memories?

After Herald Square my memories begin to blur. I was tired, utterly and absolutely leg weary. I was soft in body and soul and took a grim pleasure in torturing both. I must have started down Sixth Avenue and then swung over into Seventh, for I recall being annoyed

through my fatigue at the rumble of trains overhead and then the cessation of that annoyance. And still the question why, in God's name, why? It kept beating away in the back of my head and I still found no answer.

"Hello, kid."

That and a whiff of pungent perfume swirled back to me over the shoulder of a passing prostitute. I kept count of them as I went along; there were seven of these invitations, seven kinds of perfume, seven different accents. These invitations had never troubled me before, although they were common enough. I found myself hesitating; then I remembered that I had left my money with the battered hat. I went on. I realized that that way was not a solution, but the purchase of temporary forgetfulness.

I got home, finally; I remember finding myself in a deserted maze of streets and stopping to listen for the distant rumble of the Elevated.

Out of my fatigue there came a curious clarity of mind. I must find some way out of this narrow way of living. I had become single-minded. I had stuck in one track too long. Why? Because I lacked the energy to get out of the rut. With all my looking ahead I had never considered my personal future; my only thoughts had been for the future of The Stores. I reviewed the past year and remembered day after day when I had found work impossible, whole weeks during which I had gone stale. I found the reason now.

And the solution? To get out; to find some other interest save the unsatisfactory one of building for the sake of building.

Worthington came in soon after I arrived. He was to be married the week following; perhaps this questioning of mine was due in part to the realization that one by one my friends were dropping out of my life.

"What does a man do when he finds himself with only one interest in life?" I asked him as he prepared for bed.

"Marries her," he answered readily.

"But seriously?"

"Oh, any number of things—collect china, go crazy over fishing or golf, buy a farm and raise hens, carve the Lord's prayer on the head of a pin—make a fool of himself one way or another. What's the matter—beginning to feel the collar?"

VI

From that night dates my loss of interest in The Stores. It was a deliberate loss of interest; I kept on at the old pace for a time, but I did it in the full knowledge that this work was no longer the chief end of existence. Stowell, I think, sensed my loss of interest, for he tried to interest me in his work, urging me to give him at least part of my time. He failed. I was not interested in governmental reform. The constructive part of it was good, I knew, but it was work in line with my own work at The Stores. I wanted, above all, to get away from that.

But for a time I worked harder than before. That was the winter of the panic—1907. We were just recovering from our anti-Pingree campaign, completely recovered, in fact, but with our retrenchment policies still in force. That alone saved us; had we been caught a year before or a year later we must surely have been driven ashore. As it was, we reefed sail a bit and carried through. We even found chances to expand. Through some obscure deal Marks got control of Crawford and Ewing, a small wholesale house up town. We needed another warehouse in that section, and Marks snapped at the opportunity.

This was during the worst of the storm. I remember Marks coming into my office—we were still at the ware-house—inclined to be exultant and still somewhat doubtful about my reception of the news. He found me unaccountably unresponsive, I have no doubt.

The headline "Broker Suicide?" in the early evening edition had caught my eye. Why I noticed it I can't say; such headlines were common enough then. Under the headline I caught the name Learoyd—"Philip Learoyd, 34, of Cardigan and Learoyd . . . suspicious circumstances . . . heart failure." And below that the line:

"The deceased leaves a wife who has been notified."
That night I went home with Marks, out to his place in the Connecticut hills.

"Just a little holiday," he had urged. "Guess we've earned it."

We swung down town first to have a glance at the new building which was to be our future home, craned our necks upward at the dusky web of red and black girders, gaunt against the sky, and then headed north up Fifth Avenue. We crossed the bridge, threaded our way through the Bronx and then straightened out for the open country. The city fell away behind us, darkness came on and two wavering twin lances of light sprang out before us, charging and challenging the phantoms of darkness. We went on, through silent fields and a dwindling necklace of towns and villages, following the looping of the gray road over the hills—and all to a streaming accompaniment of talk from Marks. He insisted on pointing out the mistakes of Crawford.

He annoyed me—immensely.

"-leaves a wife-" No children, evidently.

I mentally corrected the reporter's phraseology. "A widow."

I wondered----

## VII

All that winter I looked about for a way out of my rut, tried various ways, and found them unsatisfactory. And then, one afternoon in early spring, a man from

Spain tapped me on the shoulder and turned my feet into the path I sought. I have never seen him, but I have seen his work. He was Sorolla.

How long I sat before that great picture of his in the Metropolitan Museum I have no idea—hours it must have been, for it was early afternoon when I entered and dusk when I came down the steps. How I came to be there also escapes me; perhaps in my beating back through the past I had raised some faint and shadowy memory of Luigi and the old museum in Copley Square. I only know that I came there faintly restless, still on my quest for the way out, and went away with the way found. I had no doubts of that.

I appreciate now the truth of that old, old excuse for faulty description and interpretation, the statement that, after all, words are but poor and colorless affairs. It is by no means a novel excuse and I make it with a great deal of hesitation. I have tried before this to describe that canvas and failed. Sorolla has caught something and fixed it on canvas; I cannot transmute it into type. As well bombard the stars with adjectives; they still fail to come nearer earth.

There is sunlight on that sheet of woven cloth, caught and fixed there forever; the clean, sharp afternoon sun on the backs of the lurching, patient oxen, on the belly of the sail, on the half-turned, stubby chin of the man who leans and strains against the weight of the chain; such sunlight as you get at Whitehaven on rare fall days. And, beyond that, the clean, free stretch of the open sea. That was what held me; I was brought face to face with the best and cleanest memories of my boyhood. Another sea-picture would have left me unmoved; the surge and swing of the open sea beyond sight of land would have left me apathetic and untouched. This was something I knew.

This, I realized suddenly, is what you want.

I found myself reading things into the canvas as I sat

there; I imagined the beach, strewn with long strands of kelp, with the sea welling up in the prints of the oxens' feet; behind that there must be cliffs, cliffs of amber and yellow with deep blue shadows in the clefts. And in the break, where the stream wrangles and frets its way down between the rocks, are nets drying in the sun and white walled cabins with rocks on the roofs against the winter storms. Perhaps there was even a pile of lobster pots.

It was all so wonderfully clear to me now; this, and this alone was what I wanted; the sea, the good, green, sunlit mother of all things. It was in my blood, and I had ignored it too long. I would go back.

It was raining when I came down the long steps, a light drizzle that smoothed the pavement to a dusky and shining mirror. I turned off through the Park and cut across toward the subway. I rode down to the Battery that night. The rain came steadily here, a heavy spindrift from the lower bay and from beyond that—the open sea. With it came the sharp tang of the great salt reaches; like Stowell's jungle scent, it gets into your blood and sooner or later draws you back to forgotten things.

I stood facing the driving mist; from the left hand a long double row of lights crept out, gathered speed, became foreshortened, and faded to a dim blur of yellow in the darkness. The Staten Island ferry, I knew; and yet for a moment I experienced a revival of my old childish dreams of romance. I used to watch the ships sail out of Whitehaven and wonder how long it would be before I followed them.

Now I knew that I would follow soon.

I gravely gestured in farewell to these adventurers on the high seas, and then, smiling at my own foolishness, turned homeward.

## BOOK THE THIRD

## CHAPTER THE FIRST

I

ONE of the discoveries which we all make as we look back over our lives is that they fall into regular periods. Certain minor events stand out and grow as they recede in the distance; from the distance we look back and see that what we passed as a minor pinnacle was really the culminating peak of a range, dividing one country from another. It is so in my case. I passed one divide when I went to Hatherly's; I see now that I passed another with my discovery of Sorolla.

But for a time after passing this second divide I wandered among a strange jumble of minor ranges and valleys. There was no direct transition from one sphere to another, as there was from college to Hatherly's. Events overlap and interweave; I seem to have left the old life and still not yet fully entered upon the new. Some of the events of the time immediately following this preliminary breaking away I have already told; many of the greater parts of our business expansion belong to this interval between periods—how we spread out and added to the second web and grew ever greater.

In the sense of time this third section really begins with the summer of that year. I bought the Ethelreda—
J. Everhard Lewis found her for me at Evan's yards over the river—renamed her the Shadow II in memory of the old Shadow and deliberately started to break away from The Stores and everything which had been my life for the past ten years. I found Kavenaugh at Evan's yards, too, a silent little Irishman with a soft brogue which was almost Sicilian in its liquid vowels and swift rushes from

vowel to vowel. During that summer and indeed until we built the Shadow III Kavenaugh and I shared the slim forty feet of the Shadow II between us. He was cook, engineer and nautical dry-nurse; I came second in importance as owner and deck hand. Kavenaugh was a good pal; I foresee that his ruddy cheeked, taciturn little figure will run through this third book as he does through all my best memories of this time. He was with Cadberry and myself on our wild-goose chase; after that he brought the Shadow III down from Bath and lingered about till the end—always in the background but always there.

So I started my search for the Golden Fleece of Content, a timid Jason who found increasing satisfaction in loafing up and down the coast during the summers and ever diminishing pleasure in planning and building great things during the winters. At first I found excuses for myself; I was tired, gone stale; my mind was exhausted by many harvests and needed a rest to recover its fertility. It never did recover, I may as well admit. I became an absentee, a silent partner, a dependent upon Marks—whatever you wish to call me.

Somewhere I had passed another shadowy divide. I lost ambition, deliberately threw it away. This third section of my story deals with petty ambitions, drifting and vagrant aims. From a futurist I became a hand-to-mouth dweller in the present.

At the start I stole away from business whenever I could, but later I became more brazen. I came back when I could, got my work out of the way as soon as possible and fled. It was a slow subservience of one interest to another. I met a vast number of pleasant people, joined clubs, acquired a quasi-nautical vocabulary and developed a decided distaste for work. I could see no sense in working for the sake of acquiring more money and power in order to work harder; that was Marks' way, not mine. I considered The Stores a completed whole; Marks saw

it as a base on which to construct further structures. Municipal meddling claimed Stowell entirely and he dropped out, selling his fourth interest. Every fall I came back to the offices with greater reluctance. I had no incentive in life save self-indulgence, and that rarely leads to creative work.

This was one side of my life. As my interest in this aimless and distasteful work waned, so my love for the other phase of my existence grew. There were no disillusionments when I came back to the sea; I found something finer than I had imagined.

During those summers Kavenaugh and I became familiar figures along the coast; from Monomov south to Cape Henry there was scarcely a bay or inlet into which the Shadow had not poked her long gray bow. We spent days and weeks in out-of-the-way places. Kavenaugh varned with the natives; I merely vegetated. Later I revived my long slumbering interest in painting, simply sketching at first and then starting numberless canvases and finishing some of them. . . . I'm no judge of that. I've turned out stuff since that satisfies others, but I've yet to satisfy myself. My marines are fair; no more. It's not that I started too late in life, but that I miss some elusive quality about the sea, the same distant call that old Caspar, far back in Whitehaven days, felt but failed to reduce to expression. Sometimes I've come within hailing distance of it, but it still eludes me and probably always will. Once I nearly touched it. . . .

Usually we went alone, just Kavenaugh and I, drifting as the spirit moved us. We loafed gorgeously; once in a while Worthington came across country to some somnolent little port and took the heavier work of loafing off our hands. He was more or less of a bore with his quotations and colossal ineptitude for labor, but I found it good to have some one beside Kavenaugh to talk to occasionally.

I remember many things of these three years and they

are all pleasant memories. I remember long hours of drowsing in the sun, sprawled lazily content on the forward deck, sounds of Kavenaugh hammering something below; I remember the sweeping northeasters which held us storm bound for days in remote places; and too, I recall the long summer nights under the stars, with Kavenaugh hunched over a yellow-back thriller in the cabin below—I read them myself when he had thumbed and spelled them over—and the dim velvety hush as I considered many things dreamily and worried over never a one of them. Sometimes Kavenaugh would be moved to an unwonted fit of garrulity and for hours would conduct a broken monologue about things he had seen and heard.

I remember sunrises far at sea and in harbor, the faint blue lines of distant shores half seen and half hidden in the slow rise of the thin morning mists; forgotten fragments of verse came back to me, de Lamartine and Gautier and some of the English poets—"far-folded mists and gleaming halls of morn" is one which sticks in my memory. Perhaps Worthington quoted this. I have always thought that he memorized verse during the winters and then reeled it off with a fine air of nonchalance for my benefit. I remember one fragment which he quoted:

"With only the shadows to tell the time,

And the swing of the sea to swell the rhyme

To the beat of the bell-buoys' mellow chime——"

He trailed off into silence and lazily swayed to and fro as we swung along.

"More Swinburne?" I questioned.

"My own," he admitted with becoming modesty.

"Can't help it" he added in answer to my grunt. "It's my relaxation, just as yours is lying around in filthy duck pants and a three days' beard."

I twitched the wheel ever so slightly, the Shadow swooped her nose into an oncoming wave, and a long,

thin, diamond-hung arm reached up and smote Worthington between the shoulder blades. He shivered and spluttered:

"——the turquoise waves
Spun spots of silver on the deck,
And still they sailed."

This was from "Songs of the Southland" and he regarded me dubiously as I flung his own verse at him. Then he crawled down into the safe shelter of the cock pit and shifted the talk to life insurance rates and dry shirts.

Once—it was the last of these three years—Kavenaugh and I started south in March. We took the inside route as far as we could, across cold and cheerless New Jersey in a perpetual drizzle of mist, and thence south by canal, Chesapeake Bay and the sounds to beyond Hatteras. We made a run of it from there and by fools' luck arrived at the Bahamas a day ahead of a gale from the southeast. That year we loitered slowly northward, and not until the hills about Buzzards Bay had changed from green to gold under the transmutors wand did we begin to think of laying the *Shadow II* up for the winter.

This was the last and greatest voyage of the Shadow II; it whetted my taste for this sea-gypsying and that winter I built the Shadow III.

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Marks grew amazingly in ambition during these first years after the panic of 1907. From a timid and discouraged failure, as I had found him at Brown Brothers, he became an ambitious and confident success. A latent visionary element became evident in him; with the successful passage of limitations he became contemptuous of obstacles, overlooked them, saw through and beyond them to limitless fields of expansion. What dreams he dreamed

in secret I have no means of knowing. But I do know that every queer fish that came to our nets inspired him to great imaginings. And we had everything offered us, from ostrich farms to perpetual motion solutions.

I was at once a help and an irritation to Marks. A help, because I clipped his wings, made myself the balance wheel of his wild one-sided imagination. An irritation, because I refused to take a serious interest in his vaguely magnificent plans for the future of The Stores. At first he had taken my comings and goings with an air of toleration; I would soon tire of that, he thought, and then matters would resume their old routine. He found a certain satisfaction in trying his own hand at planning, I imagine; my absences really provided a vacation for him also. He assumed an I-told-vou-so air when I sold the Shadow II, an air which vanished abruptly when I planned the Shadow III. Further madness! During the winter he exhausted all forms of appeal, trying to persuade me to return and make The Stores again my sole interest in life.

He discovered that it irritated me to have my absences referred to as "going fishing." By insinuation he classed me with the man who rows a dory seven miles for three cunners, two dogfish and a sunburnt neck. I dislike fishing and always have; yet Marks persisted in assuming that this was my diversion. He accumulated a vast store of fishing stories and dragged them into his conversation whenever possible.

There was no actual break between us. Marks must have appreciated that my romantic type of mind had seized on something and was bound to extract the last drop of possible enjoyment from it before abandoning it. I, for my part, realized that Marks' efforts at persuasion had their origin in his single-minded interest in our creation. We failed to differ seriously only because I refused to argue my side of the question. I had no arguments to make save my own inclination.

This fencing went on for two years and more, with the advantage resting with neither of us. With the start of the second year of the Shadow III I became vaguely eloquent regarding voyages which I contemplated; Fayal, perhaps, and then the Mediterranean ports, Monaco, Barcelona, all the names which had once appealed to me. Marks became more specific in his allusions to "going fishing," an accentuation rather than a change in our relationship.

We came to an agreement, finally, out at Marks' place. I know now that he must have brought me out there for the sole purpose of thrashing the matter out, although ostensibly I was brought out to view a new wing which he added to the main structure. He was forever building additions of one sort or another; the final result resembled nothing so much as a sanitarium. We inspected the wing and then sat on the porch, looking out over the valley in the soft June night. Mrs. Marks sat with us for a while, her pleasant, flowing, unpunctuated voice filling the silences in our talk. Finally she left us.

I imagine that an unusually tempting array of possibilities had been paraded before us that day, for I remember Marks being querulously discontented as I pointed out weak places in schemes which he considered worth trying.

"Well," he concluded, "perhaps it's a good thing we can't run wild, grabbing everything in sight. That'd be easy, just taking things and making them over. We've got something bigger than that."

"Yes?" I encouraged.

"N'York isn't the only city," he said with a queer touch of hesitation in his voice. "There's something to think about, Coffin."

I came out of my day-dream with a jerk. "You mean?"
"Other cities—with the same possibilities," he added with an expansive wave of the remnant of his cigar. I see now that he must have been sounding me, but at the time I thought it merely the result of some passing fancy.

"Other cities, of course . . . And with possibilities in our line, too," I agreed. "But that's for some one else. We've trouble in handling what we've bitten off here."

He muttered something about limitations.

"We're human, if that's what you mean," I concluded. He seemed on the point of explaining, hesitated, and then gave it up. I was disappointed at his easy surrender; his remark about "other cities" troubled me vaguely. I tried to draw him out, but he refused to commit himself. When he spoke again he had shifted to another subject entirely.

"You don't mean that," he said abruptly, as though he had finally convinced himself.

"Mean what?"

"About these long trips of yours. Norway or Australia or wherever it was. That would mean months of absence. You can't, you know."

"I don't know." I had my own unadmitted doubts.

"You got to stop somewhere," he persisted. "What's going to become of The Stores?"

"They seem to get along all right," I said shortly. "Seem to, but they don't. And you know it. . . . It

"Seem to, but they don't. And you know it. . . . It isn't right," he said aggrievedly.

"I'm sick of The Stores, Marks," I said after a time. "I'll sell out if you wish."

"No," he said quickly. "I've thought of that. I don't want you to. Even if you only come in one day a month it will be better than nothing at all. Don't think of that."

"What then?" I asked, secretly relieved that he had seen the matter in this light.

"We've got to settle it somehow," he went on. "You can't convince me and I can't convince you. We got to compromise."

"But how?"

"I've thought it out," he stated. "Stay away as long as you want, but stay within call. There are times when

I need you and need you bad. Suppose you're out of call; where am I? You stay around within reach and I'll give up badgering you. Is it a bargain?"

I gave up my plans reluctantly, but I gave them up.

## ш

I stayed, outwardly reluctant but inwardly content. Beginning with the first summer of the Shadow III my life centered more and more about the Arrowrock colony. Lewis, wise in the commission business and wiser still in affairs nautical, had secured me a membership in the club with my purchase of the Shadow II. In the three summers during which Kavenaugh and I had loafed up and down the coast I had been only an infrequent visitor at the Arrowrock, coming and going, dropping in whenever my wandering inclination led the Shadow II in that direction. We appeared at intervals, loitered about for a few days, revived acquaintance, and then passed on.

I payed dues, the Shadow was listed on the club register, I received notices of elections and assessments. But I was still an outlander, an odd fish, a lesser comet of uncalculated orbit, touching their system at intervals and then vanishing. At one time I thought rather seriously of becoming more than an absentee member and acquired twenty acres of rocks and scrub growth across the bay, with a vague intention of building there. Then some other interest claimed my attention and I forgot this plan in some newer and more attractive one.

The building of the Shadow III changed all this. The Shadow II had been unnoticed, one of a class; she came and went and left no unfilled blank. The Shadow III advanced my rating; through the incident of possession I became a man of importance, my appearance was an event and my disappearance a cause of regret. The Shadow III added luster to the fame of the Arrowrock, whereas the Shadow II had shone in the reflected luster

of others. I was urged to stay, consulted where before I had been informed of results, even elected to a minor committee. In stating this change I intend no reflection on the motives of the Arrowrock crowd. We are all judged by the tonnage of our visible possessions.

I liked the people at the Arrowrock. They were a new type to me, a class which before this I had seen only from the outside. At Whitehaven we had called them "dogfish," and had followed Captain Waldron's opinion that taking them by and large they were barnacles on the ship of progress. Now that I became a dogfish myself I looked on them with kindlier eyes. I contrasted them with other classes that I knew and found the others suffering by the contrast. They were perhaps less keen than the young Jews whom I knew through Marks, but I had found these upper class Hebrews usually keen on one angle only and blunted on all others. The Arrowrock people lacked the earnestness of Stowell and Theresa's class of pseudoprofessional uplifters of one sort and another; they were more tolerant, less positive, children were children and not raw material for the Montessori method; life was no less real but not quite so much concerned with the welfare of Mrs. Tony Guardanolupos and the installment of a budget system in the police and sewer departments. And, lastly and unlike the Worthingtons, they evinced only a polite interest in the Irish players and considered 'Cubism and Vorticism amusing rather than evidences of progress.

As I think of the Arrowrock, of the broad gray roof and the broader gallery above the float, of the bustle and clatter of conversation and the eternal passing and repassing of tanned and healthy faces, I sigh for the first time since I began this book. All that is past now and gone. I look back on it and get an effect of post-prandial enjoyment; I had eaten to repletion of the strong meat of business, had my dessert in the three cream puff years of the Shadow II and now sat contentedly surveying the

more enjoyable side of life. I never joined any one clique at the Arrowrock, perhaps because I am one of those enviable mortals who say little and are good listeners, perhaps because I found it more enjoyable to look on. I was essentially a looker-on. I look on now, in memory, as familiar faces pass by, happy ghosts in the clear afternoon sunshine. Or perhaps I am the ghost, cut off from their life, still lingering about the pleasant places of other days.

Certain faces stand out from the crowd. I see Cadberry, our immigrant problem; an Oxford man with a passion for archeological research. He plans a new series of lectures at New Haven this year, I understand; certain theories of his have changed since the winter of 1913. As I see him he wears the ragged blue blazer with the rose embroidered on the breast pocket which he reserves for gala occasions; with the beard which he grew in the Yucatan wilderness and decided was becoming he resembles the less Mephistophelian portraits of Mr. Bernard Shaw.

Mrs. Fairleigh passes, half content now, for one of her Botticellian daughters is at last married off and she has only one cause for worry left—another daughter. Worry keeps one thin, I observe cynically, and I think that she overhears, for she turns and makes a face at me. She is a good and kindly soul, even though she insists against all reason that she had a hand in my marriage.

Peter Annersley passes, grayer haired and somehow more youthful than ever. He and J. Everhard Lewis still debate their old question of centerboard vs. keel; with a pair of churchwarden pipes, two tankards and ruffles at throat and wrist, the pair of them might pose for two fox hunting English squires of the last century. Annersley has aged of late, for I hear him quoting Larry, an unheard of thing.

"Industrial Janizaries, my son calls them," he says,

and I am left in doubt whether the Janizaries he refers to are munition workers or some newly listed stock.

Other faces pass in review, a long procession of them; new faces and old faces; people whom I knew slightly and those who considered the *Shadow* as much their possession as mine. I have mentioned only those who have a place in this story; there are a host of others who were equally important at the time. There is Ham Porgis, meditating some new asininity; Robinson, talking war bonds instead of Cobalt; Blake, his once placid face showing signs of worry. I sold him the *Shadow* at his own ridiculous figure and have no sympathy for him.

Blake makes an incongruous figure solely by reason of his worried air. The one quality that the Arrowrock people had in common, the one thing that stamped them as a class, was the absence of worry. They were frankly well pleased with themselves, almost belligerently unafraid of the future, and, above all, with no exaggerated notion of the importance of their own activities. They enjoyed life in a singularly unfurtive and courageous manner and made no pretense of doing anything else.

The puckery, Puritanic, New England conscience must be very dilute in me; despite the fact that this life was manifestedly wasteful and unproductive, I liked it. I clung to it despite Marks' unveiled sarcasm and Stowell's blundering attempts to interest me in municipal efficiency. I found more pleasure in wasting than in producing.

IV

In this survey of the Arrowrock crowd I have left out two figures, left them out intentionally. Figures stood out, I said; the Annersley twins, Lawrence and Lauretta, stood out so far that they seemed outside. I have dim memories of them as part of the crowd during the years of the Shadow II: I remember Larry as a gangling youth with a silky voice—changeable silk—and Lauretta I fail to remember at all.

Then young Larry wrecked the Dart—one of the first of the wave-gatherers, more of an experiment than anything else, built on the graceful lines of a bread tin and productive chiefly of noise and speed. He took her out in a stiff breeze and lost control, with the result that the Dart went clam digging and Kav and I put out in the tender to rescue Larry.

We met him swimming in as calmly as though such accidents were every-day affairs. We pulled him aboard and started back; as we went along he and Kavenaugh argued over the cause of the accident. He took his shipwreck with remarkable coolness, holding a cigarette gingerly between wet fingers and being careful not to drip on the cushions.

"I told you," argued Kavenaugh. "You shifted the engine too far aft; she got up on her tail and of course she steered—what the deuce!"

He broke off and stared at Larry, who slid down limply on the floor of the cockpit, his head lying back inert on the seat.

"My sister," said Larry, out of the corner of his mouth. "She'll give me the devil because she's missed the fun. I'm all right; this is for her benefit."

He gestured ahead to the float; a girl in a striped blazer and white skirt ran down the long run leading from the clubhouse, a small and excited terrier revolving about her like a satellite. She crossed the float and waited for us as Kavenaugh shut off the power and we circled up along-side; the terrier went quite mad with excitement and tore excitedly up and down the float as we drew in. Larry's sister stood waiting.

"No use hiding," she called angrily. "I saw you from the house. You wait! You sneaked off and . . . Oh!"

She caught sight of Larry's quiet figure and, without hesitation, leaped the intervening space of water. The

boat rocked, and Larry lolled to and fro horribly. He opened one eye as she kneeled beside him, then closed it and opened the other. He groaned realistically.

"I'm all right, Laury," he said. "Hit my head, I guess."
"And I was going to scold you!" she exclaimed peni-

tently.

"I deserve it," he assented. "But you might have been hurt."

"Huh! I can swim as well as you can," she asserted. "You're not really hurt, then?"

"I feel better already," said Larry in relief. "But if it hadn't been for Coffin——"

Lauretta sat back on her heels and smiled up at me. I had an impression of gray eyes wide apart beneath smooth brown hair, a nose with a tiny drift of freckles across the bridge, and a square little chin.

"Thank you," she said seriously, and extended her

hand.

"It was Kavenaugh, really," I said in embarrassment. She included Kavenaugh in her smile of gratitude. "But you, especially," she said, and smiled at me again, still holding my hand. I was aware of another sensation beside embarrassment; it had been a long time since any woman had looked at me other than impersonally.

Then Timmy, the terrier, created a diversion by licking Larry's face. Larry declared himself completely recovered, since the threatened scolding seemed averted. They went off together up the run to the clubhouse as we set out again for the Shadow; all the way out Kavenaugh chuckled to himself and I wondered how I had forgotten that Peter Annersley had so good looking a daughter. And why had she looked at me in that fashion? Gratitude?

I came ashore that night and found myself somewhat of a hero, much to my surprise and disgust. Ham Porgiss, that industrious liar, had been busy; Larry had gone down for the third time and I had risked my life diving for him. Peter Annersley insisted upon playing the heavy father and making a great fuss over me. In desperation I told him the simple truth, that Larry could have swum ashore without help and that whatever rescue there had been was Kavenaugh's doing. I was accused of colossal modesty. . . .

I date my real interest in the Arrowrock crowd from this time. The Shadow became a mere dormitory and ferry boat for week end trips; I spent more and more of my time ashore. And the greater part of this time ashore was passed at the gray roofed Annersley house between the Fairleighs' overpretentious Colonial front and the great rambling Garvin place. Larry voiced the opinion that I was a good scout. Lauretta adopted me. The fact that I was a canvas spoiler was discovered; the Arrowrock people in general were convinced that I was quite a personage. Even Aunt Hatty, the straight backed, withered old soul who kept house for Peter, was won over. And I enjoyed it all. Your solitary man always yearns to be noticed; the more solitary he has been the more he enjoys being courted by others.

I, once called "Gloomy Gus" by a pompadoured typist, became adept in making myself agreeable. I discovered that I could talk for an hour with Mrs. Fairleigh's two empty headed daughters, say nothing, and yet leave behind me the impression that I was all there mentally. Not that I degenerated into a "parlor snake" or a "fan hound"—I cull from Larry's pure collegiate English—but I discovered a vein of metal which I proceeded to coin into the counters which pass current among Arrowrock crowds. I observed, I imitated—in common with yourself and some millions of others I cherish the belief that in me the stage lost a shining light—and thanks perhaps to the charitable inclinations of my audience I succeeded in passing off my imitations as genuine metal. . . .

One of my audience was convinced, and the discovery of the fact brought me up short for a while.

Peter had gone through some minor triumph that day—beaten Larry and young Peaslee eighteen holes, I think—and was correspondingly elated when I dropped around that evening. I heard the details of the victory; Lewis appeared, all white shirt front and ruddy face, and I heard the details again. They drifted off into reminiscences of the wool brokerage business and its deterioration since they had left it. Lauretta, at the piano behind us, played one of Macdowell's sea symphonies, a great crashing thing with the surge and sweep of galleons in mid-Atlantic running through it, the keen shrill of winds in taut rigging in its overtones. Presently the music dwindled into random chords and ceased. Peter and J. Everhard still plodded on. Some impulse led me to turn and glance over my shoulder at Lauretta.

She had swung around from the keyboard and sat with her shoulders drooping forward, her clasped hands inert on her knees. . . . She looked at me with a curious intentness; what I saw in her eyes brought my heart into my throat. For a bare instant her eyes met mine, then she flushed, swung around again and started to play inaccurately. She played for a moment, struck a great jangling chord, and then jumped up and left the room. . . .

For a week after that I avoided the Annerleys. I knew that look, knew what it meant. It troubled me. I had seen it before, the last time in the eyes of a cashier at one of our stores. Then, as now, I had deliberately run away. But then I had forgotten it in work—the cashier was not particularly attractive, besides; now I dwelt on it, argued with myself, thought of taking the *Shadow* off on a cruise and was restrained from abject flight only by a sense of humor. Running away—from what?

"It won't do," I argued, until old habit put the question why? into my head. There was no answer. I spare you a statement of my mental processes. These dialogues

of a semi-confirmed bachelor are interesting to no one save himself.

I came back to the Annersleys eventually, came back cautiously and lost my caution as I found nothing changed. Lauretta met me with an exaggerated but well simulated indifference, Larry had been away on a cruise and had failed to notice my absence, Peter had developed a habit of slicing his drives and had troubles of his own.

There was no repetition of that look, and in time I almost doubted that I had seen it. Lauretta treated me the same as she did every one, bullied me covertly, flattered, interfered, and then smiled at me with gray eyes beneath level brows with the same smile which she employed to secure her ends with others. Her apparent main object in life was having her own way. On one week end trip which the Annersleys took with me she flattered Bergson, my sailing master, into forgetting his gray hair and grandchildren, got herself nicely messy and oily in Kavenaugh's sacred engine room, and reduced Karl, the cook, to abject slavery. He waxed his mustache and changed his apron three times daily during that trip and spent much time and labor in concocting what he proudly announced as sauce Laurette.

But despite the fact that to all appearances I was only one of the crowd, I clung to the memory of that look. I found it a pleasant memory, after all. And, by subtle gradations, I progressed to wondering what she had seen in me to inspire that look. I finally decided that it was the manner of the beaux tenebreux which, unconsciously or not, I had acquired. A beaux tenebreux, as Estey used to tell us, is the gloomy, raven haired hero of the old French classical drama.

"He has three characteristics," I remember Estey saying, "a plumed hat, a cloak, and a past full of sorrow.
. . . That type," he added dryly, "is always very interesting—to women."

But Estey was very much married and I doubt if his testimony was unbiased.

V

A fragment of one of Captain Waldron's highly colored romances recurs to me. He described a ship which he had once sailed on.

"She was a ratty old hooker," he said reminiscently, "and more mates than a few had cussed their way into hell from off her decks."

His description applies to the Shadow III, not that she was a "ratty old hooker," but that I nearly followed the example of the legendary mates.

Marks was the cause. His desire to reinterest me in business was neither dead nor sleeping. Despite our agreement, or perhaps in accordance with his interpretation of it, he persisted in breaking in on me, finding new methods of interference, trying them, and passing on to some new method as he found me still recalcitrant. His most annoying act was the dragging of the Shadow into business, following the precedent of Mohamet and the mountain.

He came to consider the Shadow as an extension of the offices, rather than my private possession. Nearly every Saturday saw a crowd brought down for a week end outing—the consummation of some business deal lurking in the background. Marks always wore a smug smile of satisfaction as they drembarked on Monday. Finally he went too far. My patience snapped. There was a deal on with an especially hard-faced crowd—the Western Biscuit people, I think they were. I ran the Shadow out beyond Montauk in a stiff breeze, pumped out half the water ballast and stalled the engines—all quite unintentionally. The entire crowd, Marks included, were most enthusiastically seasick. The deal fell through and Marks never forgave me.

He was far from cordial that winter. Whether or not he suspected that he had been the victim of a conspiracy, I know that after the failure of our negotiations with Western Biscuit his objections to my absence ceased abruptly. He became indifferent; whether I came or went was a matter of no moment to him. In one way I regretted the change. This intermittent debate on work vs. pleasure had been a game between us, sometimes serious and sometimes not, and its cessation left an unfilled blank.

But his indifference failed to trouble me greatly. I was not longer dependent solely on The Stores for employment during the winter. The Fairleighs and the Lewises and Peter Annersley stayed at the Arrowrock that winter and I became a frequent visitor.

On one of these visits I was inspired, through J. Everhard, to revive my plans for building on the twenty acres that I had bought across the bay. I even became involved in negotiations with a young architect named DeWitt, an engaging personality with tortoise shell spectacles and a sturdy imagination. He became very enthusiastic over my plans—I suspect that he needed the money—and in due course of time submitted sketches. There were three of these, immense shambling creations burgeoning with turrets and gables, all evidently planned with the object of finding out just how much I would stand for. We spent an evening over them at J. Everhard's and finally decided that by cutting off fifty feet and three turrets from the least blatant of DeWitt's constructions we might obtain something which would serve. I carried the sketches back to town, threw them on the table and forgot them. Young DeWitt bothered me occasionally for a time and then apparently forgot them also. They lay there and gathered dust until Lauretta dug them out.

She and Larry came down to the old rooms which I still clung to, intent upon dragging me off to the the-

ater; during their Christmas vacation it must have been, for I remember sloshing through wet snow on my way home. Some unexpected business had detained me at the office; on my arrival I found that Lauretta, tiring of inaction, had started to clean up the table which served as catch-all for books, pamphlets, letters and those thousand miscellaneous articles which have no settled place in the general order of things. In the process she had unearthed DeWitt's ambitious drawings from one of the lower strata and pegged them out on the table with inkpots and paste jars. She and Larry surveyed them in wonder as I entered; Skip, in the background, hovered visibly between a desire to please my visitors and fear of the consequences which might arise from this disturbance of the sacred catch-all.

"I know that this one is a sanitarium," said Larry, "but these others are too large for apartment houses and too small for hotels. What are they, Coffin—Bakst architectural nightmares?"

"Regular houses," I answered. "'Designed for John Coffin, Esq., by R. Plympton DeWitt,' just as the label in the corner says. Nice places, aren't they?"

"Very homelike," said Lauretta sarcastically. "But

who's going to live in them? Not you?"

"You've guessed it. On the north shore—you know that land I bought two years ago? Which one would look best?"

"Really?" said Lauretta, looking at me in disappointment.

"Why not? Everhard Lewis approves of this one." I indicated a French château with Colonial influence.

"Oh, that!" she said scornfully. "He has rotten taste." She studied the drawings for a moment with growing scorn. "This DeWitt shouldn't be allowed at large—putting silly ideas in people's heads. Promise me that you won't build any of these."

I promised willingly enough. I had no great need of a house. "But you're depriving a struggling young architect of a chance to shine."

"Depriving him of a chance to make an idiot of himself and you too," she answered, biting thoughtfully at the end of a pencil. "And I have a plan of my own—not exactly mine, for I stole it, just as he stole these, probably. But mine is stolen from a home, not a dipsomaniac vision like these."

She reversed one of the sheets and drew little lines thoughtfully. "Do you remember how we used to go over there when we were kids, Larry? When dad would let us, and sometimes when he wouldn't. And——"

"And I used to get licked for leading you astray," laughed Larry.

"I know—and it was always my fault, really. You used to fish off Valentine's Rock-where the man hid from the Indians—while I played house on that little level patch between the two arms of rock that come down from the You must know that place," she appealed to me, "they come down like two sprawling lion's paws, with those big pines for the lion's head. And once in a while he bends over and sniffs at the top of the big oak that stands in the level place. . . . I used to plan houses that I would build there some day, when my ship came in. They were foolish houses, of course, worse than these here, all turrets and wings and angles. But last winter I found the house that belongs there; of course you couldn't move it down there, but you could build one like it around the oak tree. Not around it, exactly, but behind it. Like this."

We bent over the table on either side of her as she sketched rapidly. She made a tiny ground plan in the shape of a letter L first; "Just to get the angle of the gables," she explained in a patronizing tone. Then, with that as a basis, the front elevation grew under her

swift strokes. It was a very simple plan, just a low, broad structure with a roof coming down midway between the two stories and pierced by dormer windows for the chambers. The interior angle of the L was cut across at a point midway on the arms to give dignity to the entrance; on either side, where it joined the arms, she drew an immense chimney half protruding from the structure and reaching up above it to a level with the ridge-pole.

She leaned back and regarded her work dubiously. "It lacks detail," she criticized. "There's a doorway here," indicating the filled angle, "with a broad fanlight over it and trellises on each side. And in the angle is the oak tree, with perhaps a paved court around it. It's just

a rough sketch—but do you like it?"

"I do like it," I agreed. "I'll build your house."

"Good!" she said in satisfaction, and began to sketch in details, windows and the stonework of the chimneys and the trellises on either side of the entrance. Larry tired of watching her, yawned, and went over to inspect my book case. . . .

"It's not mine," she said as she put on the finishing touches about the base of the oak tree. Her tone was one of abstraction; yet there was a slight quaver in her

voice.

"Nor mine either, until you've finished it," I answered.

"Poor orphan house!" she said softly, so softly that I should have missed her voice had my head not been close to hers as I leaned over the table beside her.

"We might adopt it together—call it ours," I suggested in her own tone.

There was no answer. But her flying fingers stumbled, and as I watched I saw a deep flush pass over her half averted face, pass slowly as the first gleam of dawn touches and awakens a quiet expanse of untroubled water. . . .

ΙX

By June the Shack—as Larry christened it—was well on the road to completion. Young DeWitt was surprised at my sudden burst of enthusiasm and seemed rather to resent the discarding of his carefully planned structures. After one or two weak attempts to show the superiority of his plans over Lauretta's he gave in, consulted an apochryphal list of engagements and promised to devote his entire time to my service. With her rough sketch as a basis he evolved a marvelously technical set of plans, and, upon receiving Lauretta's permission, work was started. By June he had run up the walls and crowned them with the red tiled roof; the rougher part of the work had been accomplished and the workmen were busy on the interior.

I came down to the Arrowrock earlier than ever that year, partly with the childish feeling that by coming early I was showing Marks that his indifference had no effect on me, partly because I found building houses and boats more pleasant than wrestling with unrealities at the offices. Besides the Shack I supervised the building of the two boats which Larry and I had planned—Warp and Woof we called them finally. Cheyney built them for us at his yards, and with Kavenaugh's assistance we had them ready when Larry and Lauretta returned from school. For the first time in a long while I was really busy at creation, creating little things, spending money rather than making it, but still busy and glad of it.

I remember many pleasant things of that summer as I sit here and look back on it, and through all these remembrances, binding them together and connecting the disassociated parts, runs the figure of Lauretta, always with the faint half smile on her lips and a little sun drift of freckles across the bridge of her nose and always having her own way. She bullied and flattered young De-Witt into a state of abject slavery, suggesting changes

in the Shack and then persuading him, in some subtle way, that the suggestions were his own. She stole the Woof and went off on private excursions across the Sound, coming back disappointed because the Woof refused to misbehave. She and Larry beat me at everything save tennis and swimming. Tennis I refused to play unless they eliminated the net which some confounded fool left across the court to catch my best smashes; they refused my simple request and I was content to sit with Peter on the side lines. Swimming has always been my one physical accomplishment; it has always been the greatest fun in the world to swing slowly along with head buried, watching the crabs and schools of cunners among the sea weed and kelp in the swaying green depths below. Once in a while Larry beat me in a sprint out to the raft, but Lauretta always lagged far behind.

And, incidentally, I won the confidence of Aunt Hatty. During the previous summer she had regarded me with shadowy suspicion, as a newcomer and one whose niches in Arrowrock society was not yet secured. Now I seemed secure of my place, and my appearance set the clockwork smile in motion. At one time or another she made me the confidant of a vast volume of family history; how Larry had always been a trial to her, how Lauretta had always been stubborn, and—a rather embarrassing subject—how Peter always forgot to change his shirts until she wrested the old one from him by main force. Usually she talked about Lauretta and I listened willingly.

I remember one afternoon in particular; she talked monotonously and busied herself over an endless piece of embroidery while I listened patiently. I give you only fragments of her main thread; between fragments she wandered off into limitless fields of inconsequential memories.

"... bit her in the leg and she never so much as cried. A little yellow dog it was, and she wouldn't let them shoot it ... left a scar, of course, but out of sight. ... Very forward, although I guess there are enough of the other

kind around . . . she gets it from the other side of the family . . . hit him in the eye . . . cried because Lawrence said he would enlist in the navy so she couldn't bother him . . . swore dreadfully and Peter spanked her . . . all arms and limbs as girls are at that age . . . fell out of the tree and broke her nose. But she climbed higher than Lawrence."

She broke a thread at this point and her gurgling flow of ancient history ceased. The thread mended, she paused with needle poised.

"She takes a great interest in your new house," she said, and shot me an oblique glance over one thin shoulder.

Aunt Hatty, I decided, was not so dull as some people believed her to be.

x

All things come to an end, and so did the building of the Shack. In late August the contractor unwillingly confessed that he could find no further excuse for keeping his crew about the place; the captains of the saw and chisel and the kings of the trowel and spade departed reluctantly. I watched the last of them go that afternoon, locked the doors and went over to town in the Warp.

There was no one about the Annersley place, the piazza was deserted, but from the living room came weird wails mingled with the frantic yelping of Timmy. Larry and Lauretta were at the further end of the room, bent over the phonograph; before it sat Timmy, wailing to high heaven and beating the floor steadily with his little stub tail. He yelped in greeting as I entered and ran to me for protection from his tormentors, whining and lapping wildly at my face as I picked him up. He had good reason for his wails. The phonograph shricked and wailed away, its song now rising to a high banshee whine and now dying away into guttural growls, like a full orches-

tra of the Chinese fiddles which perhaps boys still make from tin cans and resined string.

"A new record?" I made myself audible above the fiendish clamor.

"An old one—played backward," grinned Larry, listening with appreciation. "Played for Timmy's benefit. He likes it."

Lauretta slid down on the floor and gathered the wailing Timmy in her arms. "He's tinkered with its innards, as Kavenaugh would say," she explained. "It runs backward. There, there Timmy, shall we shut it off?" Timmy burrowed his head into the folds of her dress and signified his assent.

"We had to do something," said Larry as he switched off the wails, "so we made Timmy pay his board."

"Mean things, aren't they, Timmy?" Timmy shook himself free, smelled disapprovingly of the cabinet, and stalked off in dignity, taking the life of the party with him.

Larry tinkered with the "innards" of the machine again, tried a record to see if it ran correctly, listened lazily, and then subsided to yawning indolence. Lauretta made one or two half hearted efforts to find something interesting about the room, failed, and succumbed to the drowsy afternoon languor. I pawed over the magazines, found them all old, and yawned in sympathy with Larry. Timmy reappeared, preceded by a pitter-patter of toenails across the piazza; he looked around droopy eyed, yawned, thumped his tail, and yawned again. Larry laughed and threw a book at him.

"Most insulting dog I ever saw," he said, and then, with a faint show of interest: "How's the Shack coming along?"

"Burrows called off the last of his men to-day," I answered. "He declared with tears in his eyes that he couldn't think of another thing to do."

"Industrious race, carpenters," commented Larry.

"When they can't find anything to do there just isn't anything. No use looking." He yawned again. "Dull old town. I'll be glad to get back to work again."

"Fine lot of work you do," scoffed Lauretta. She thought for a moment, then jumped up, filled with a sudden idea. "I have it," she announced. "We'll go over in the *Louise* and inspect the house. We haven't been over that way for a month, Larry."

"Too late," objected Larry.

"Nonsense," she decided. "I'll get up a lunch and we

can stay as long as we please."

"I detest picnic lunches," Larry objected. "Ham sandwiches—Graham crackers—red ants—spiders—warm olives in a long necked bottle and nothing to spear them with. And besides," seized with a sudden spasm of right-eousness, "I ought to plug for those deferred exams of mine. Back to the old grind again."

"Logical, isn't he?" commented Lauretta. "You're coming whether you want to or not. You can bring your

books."

"Darned tyrant!" grumbled Larry as she went off to

pack up the luncheon. . . .

Lauretta came back weighted down with an immense hamper which she set down with a thud. "I just grabbed everything in sight," she said, licking her fingers. She linked her arm in mine and we started. "Be careful of it, Larry," she called back.

I looked around. Larry tried the weight of the hamper, grinned, scratched his head, and then picked it up

and started after us.

"Is it heavy?" she asked as we went down the hill.

Larry shifted it from one arm to the other and said that he could carry it all day.

"I put in only seven books," she went on with a smothered laugh. I think that Larry swore under his breath. Sometimes his patience was sorely tried.

We went over in the Louise, the slow, comfortable old

sloop which Peter Annersley still clung to, sliding slowly along in the light breeze with the green shore, hazy in the afternoon sun, on our left.

"It fits in, doesn't it?" said Lauretta lazily, as we rounded the last point and saw the house. Her description was accurate. It did fit in. It had an air of permanency, of having been there for uncounted years. Barring a lack of hangings at the windows and a bare patch here and there on the lawn, it was complete. The great oak hung over the two chimneys as though it had brushed their tops for years; the dark masses of the pines stood on tiptoe and peered over the roof from the rocky heights behind to catch a glimpse of the quiet Sound and the far blue coast of Long Island.

We landed and went over the completed house, bare of furniture and with the floors still littered with odds and ends of plaster and lumber, but still a finished work. Lauretta was frankly pleased with it all, for it was partly her work, and even Larry agreed that it was "some hovel." As for myself—well, it was a house and I had built it and meant to live in it some day. I took more pleasure in showing it than in the house itself.

The sun was low when we finished our survey and Larry began to hint that it was time he was paid for his labors with the hamper. He proposed that we eat under the tree before the house.

"Indeed we will not," decided Lauretta. "We'll eat in the house like regular folks. Don't be a savage, Larry. You two can get those saw horses down from upstairs and bring in those loose planks, too. We'll have a table."

She surveyed our work critically. "And now clear out," she ordered. "Mustn't interfere with the cook. If you want, you can go down to the *Louise* and bring up three of the folding chairs. And don't hurry back."

We were loitering back up the slope when she appeared at the doorway and beat on a sheet of copper roofing, in the lack of a dinner gong. During our short absence she had worked wonders. White linen and silver gleamed on the table beneath shaded candles; the rubbish left by the carpenters blazed and flickered in the fireplace. She had even found time to roll in the neck of her dress and turn up the sleeves in passable imitation of an evening gown. Larry surveyed the transformed room, whistled in amazement and then bowed to her gravely.

"Pardon our rough appearance," he said. "You should have packed our evening clothes in the hamper."

"I didn't think of it," she confessed, flushed and smiling.

"You remembered everything else," he conceded in

appreciation.

He even forgave her the weight of the hamper as the meal progressed, and when he leaned back with a sigh of repletion Laury produced from beneath the table a vacuum bottle filled with steaming coffee. Larry applauded. She reached again and brought up a tin of cigarettes.

"Aladdin and his lamp have nothing on you," he said

in rare praise.

The slow summer twilight drew on as we talked; darkness crept across the dim blue vista of the Sound. All outside faded to a velvety blur, with only the slender mast of the Louise reaching up against the eastern sky and tracing slow arabesques against the last reflection of the sunset.

Larry became vaguely expectant regarding the coming year, and then drifted off into a recital of the exploits of one "old 'Fox' Trott," his room mate of the past year. He modestly suppressed his own part in the exploits. I listened automatically, interjecting comments at suitable points, really engrossed in watching Lauretta's profile. She sat between us, facing the last flicker of the tiny fire, resting her chin on her hands and gazing far away at nothing. I wondered what she thought of the house which

she had planned, progressed from that to wondering what she thought of me, and from that drifted off into thoughts of my own.

my own.
"—entuthen excelpnes tres parasangus," said Larry fi-

nally, with a note of question in his voice.

"Yes. Go on," I answered in faint encouragement.

"Uh huh," murmured Laury, and nodded at something beyond the unseen coast of Long Island.

A jangle of spinning metal brought me back to the present. I looked up to see two coppers on the plate in the center of the table.

"For your thoughts," offered Larry.

Lauretta looked up, bewildered; her eyes met mine and held them for a long moment and I had a glimpse of the vision which had engrossed her attention. Then the fire flared up in an expiring gasp and her color changed.

"Don't be foolish, Larry," she said severely as he shook the plate before her. "No, not even for both cents. One—one silly person is enough for one family. Go on; you were saying something about Fox Trott and the book agent?"

Larry took up his recital again, badgered by her incessant questions. He had asked for attention, she defended.

It was late dusk when we dismantled the table and packed up. We made our way down to the landing in procession, lighting the way with the candles; their clear yellow flames ascended flickerless in the evening calm. We hoisted the sail and stood out, scarcely moving under the impulse of the slow breath of wind beyond the point.

"You'll find your books still in the hamper, Larry,"

observed Lauretta sweetly.

"I never study by lamplight," he announced. "Bad for the eyes, you know."

"And after carrying them all this way."

"That's so," he considered. "It is a waste of effort,

isn't it? I suppose I may as well have a look at the Faërie Queene. I can get that out of the way."

He went below, and the yellow radiance of the swinging lamp shone out and made a little world of light in the darkness. We heard the rapid rustle of pages, and his voice came to us, raised in protest.

"Say, the darned thing takes up the whole book!" he

called. "What a whale of a poem!"

He grumbled for a moment and then settled down to read; quiet descended once more. Something of the spirit of sailing ships came over us, the calm, steady movement, the dependence upon the elemental forces of wind and water, the detachment from all haste. We sailed on, the canvas scarcely drawing, a fragment of light and life amid the dusk.

The hamper, opened by Larry in his search for Spenser, lay at our feet; atop of the accumulation within was the

plate with Larry's offering.

"What an idiot he is," said Lauretta in a low voice. She poked at the plate with a slender foot and sent the coins tinkling down among the china and candlesticks below. "I wouldn't have told him. Would you?"

"Yes."

"Yes?" she encouraged faintly.

"I wondered what you thought about me. I think I know."

"Oh," she said, in a small voice.

Larry's voice, raised in whining falsetto song—not from Spenser, however—floated up to us, accompanied by a heel and toe on the locker as he lay sprawled at ease under the light.

"I want to marry a dashin' young he-hero, Just like they do in a book;

One who will carry me far o'er the o-hoshun,

Some place where no one will look;

Ro-homance we'll find in each thing that surrounds us,

In hill side and valley and brook:
All will be joyous,
And girlous and boyous—
Just like it is in a book."

Refreshed, he returned to his reading.

We sat in silence for a moment; a passing ripple swayed the rudder and brought her shoulder against mine. She remained half leaning against me, her feet bathed in the yellow light of the lamp and all above that a mere blot of white against the darkness.

"I'm neither dashing, nor young, nor a hero," I said

slowly, "but---"

"Does that matter?" she whispered, and raised her head slowly; her dress, still turned in at the throat, showed a little gleaming triangle of sun brown. I slipped my arm about her and drew her close, her face very dim and sweet under the piled masses of her hair.

"No, it doesn't," I asserted confidently.

## XI

But somehow or other it wasn't "just like it is in a book." I suppose I should say that I went back to the Shadow that night and walked the deck under the silent stars, dreaming strange, sweet dreams and resolving that the new volume which opened before me should be stained by none of the blots and erasures which had marred the old. As a matter of fact, I did nothing of the kind. I walked the deck and thought, but my thoughts were of another order. I wondered whether I was a conquering lover or a captured vassal. I felt more like the second than the first; I seemed caught up in a whirling progression of events over which I had no control. I felt happy, but it was a happiness strangely mingled with doubt.

I came ashore the next morning still doubtful. Lauretta met me at the head of the run leading up from the

float; my doubts increased rather than diminished as I saw her framed against the shadows of the chart room in the long rays of the morning sun. She looked on me with an air of proprietorship; when a man passes thirty-five and is still single he instinctively recoils from such a look, however pleased he may be.

"I saw you coming from the house," she explained frankly.

I drew two chairs to the rail and we sat looking out over the harbor and the Sound dimpling in the sunlight. The distant coast of Long Island hung suspended in the air, a long blue ragged line hung upon an invisible spring which vibrated slowly. In the harbor below us a sail lifted, crawling upward in slow, regular jerks, caught the faint breeze and stole slowly out through the anchored craft. Lauretta blinked and yawned, then swung her chair about, half facing me.

"About last night—" she hesitated.

"Yes?" I encouraged, and wondered what was coming. She touched the sleeve of my coat in a furtive little caress. "Let's not tell any one, for a while," she said.

"As you wish," I answered and was conscious of an inexplicable sense of relief. Curiosity prompted me: "But why?"

"Two reasons, and they're both foolish," she confessed. "I want another year at school. I need it. You wouldn't want me to be half educated all my life, would you? I thought not. And a girl who goes back to school flagrantly engaged has a rotten time of it. I've seen it work. They're envious, you know—and mean." She contemplated their depravity in silence for a moment. "Not that I care," she said belligerently, "but I do care. You see?" "They—"

"Oh, they look wise whenever you get a letter; they ask silly questions, poke in where they're not wanted."

"I see. They would pick on you. Don't let them. And the second reason?"

"I don't know whether to tell you or not." She bit her lips and flushed. "I've never had a secret, and I've always wanted one. Look, suppose you and I went to dad this morning and told him? We will, if you want—but what would he say?"

"That's easy," I answered. "Bless you; you're mak-

ing a fool of yourself but I can't help it."

"Exactly. And Larry?"

"That's a harder one," I considered. "I think he'd fidget about and rub his nose——"

"I've tried to break him of that," she interrupted, as

though speaking of a disobedient child.

"-And finally he might say, 'Good work, kid.'"

"Just so," she agreed. "As prosaic as though I'd said that I was going swimming with you. And Mrs. Fairleigh——"

"Would burble and splash sentiment all over the place," I concluded. "You're right; we had better keep

it a secret."

"I knew you'd see it," she said in satisfaction.

"But the romantic part of it——" I hesitated. "Are there any hollow trees around here? To hide notes in, you know. And I'll serenade you, on dark nights. I know 'Bristol Town' and 'Hilo Johnny.' But I'll have to find some one to play the mandolin. There's an Italian barber over town who plays divinely, has big eyes and flowing hair and——"

"Don't be ridiculous," she corrected severely. "If you bring any Italian barbers around I'll play the hose on

both of you."

"But it would distract Mrs. Fairleigh," I argued. "She would think that you and the barber—surely a Count in the old country——"

She made a grimace and wrinkled her nose at me. "You're making fun of me. One poor little girl, who has always been frank and aboveboard with every one, de-

mands romance and you give her barbers. Don't you like me any better than that?"

"I do, Laury," I answered seriously. A rapid survey

revealed no one within sight. . . .

"Clandestine meeting the first," I said as I released her. "It's fun this way, isn't it?" she asked breathlessly. . . .

I was, after all, the conquering lover. But still—you know how it is in a dream? You become involved in an impossible sequence of events, a sequence which still seems sane and plausible and pleasant. Yet through it all some wakeful guardian in the back of your consciousness tells you that presently you will awake and come back again to the cold and ordered world of realities. Not that you want to come back, for you don't. But you know that you will.

1

THEN Lauretta discovered a doubt.

"I'm not sure," she said, apropos of nothing. She twirled her tennis racquet between her hands and gloomily watched Larry and young Peaslee scuffle on the float below the veranda.

"Not sure of what?" I asked. "I'm sure of one thing—if your flirtation with young Peaslee goes much further I'll do something desperate."

"You know why I'm doing it," and she smiled encour-

agingly on Peaslee.

"I know; you've got Larry guessing. But I'm jealous.

I thirst for his gore."

"He's only a silly young boy," she said from the heights of wisdom. Peaslee was only two years older than Lauretta. But she seemed pleased at my jealousy.

"You're not sure of what?" I came back to her first

remark.

"Whether I'd better go back to school or not. . . . Up the river—like Sing Sing. I do hate to be bossed."

"You'd rather take your orders from me?"

"You? Don't you worry about that. . . . But do you really think I'd better?"

"I think so."

"So do I—really," she admitted. "I wanted to find out what you thought. What are you going to do all winter?"

Larry and Peaslee created a diversion by falling overheard in their scuffle and I was saved the necessity of a haply.

The question troubled me; it lurked in the background

during the two weeks which remained before her departure and then came out brazenly and demanded answer. What was I to do during that winter? There was nothing new in prospect. I foresaw a winter of working at matters which I didn't care about; a forced companionship with uncongenial men. There would be long days at the offices and long evenings alone. Marks would be glad to see me return and would be more reluctant than ever to let me go again in the spring. I would become interested in some problem and work over it when every instinct told me that my work was usefess. I foresaw a succession of trade dinners; I shuddered at the thought that I might be asked to speak. I would resist weakly, then consent, spend a miserable week with the hour of inquisition drawing nearer—and then either be called out of town or prevail on Marks to take my place. I knew; I had been there before. And I knew also that it would be even worse than I imagined it.

A driving northeaster came whooping in on the day that Lauretta left. For three days I moped around like a lost soul, alternating in dreary monotony between the club house and the Shadow. Across the rain-swept gallery of the club one had a view of an endless procession of approaching whitecaps; across the shining decks of the Shadow one had a view of a ceaseless parade of receding whitecaps. It was all highly interesting. There was no solace in the calm, crisp September weather which followed the northeaster. Every one had left or was about to leave, fleeing as though from a pestilence. The season was over. Those who were left were apologetic and defensive. The yards toward town sprouted a sudden growth of masts; what craft were too large to be hauled out for the winter were towed to safe anchorages and decked over for the winter.

Still I maundered and moped around, unwilling to return and take up work again and still cursing myself for staying. I was vaguely dissatisfied with everything, and,

as ever, totally unable to put my finger on the cause of my trouble. I was really tired of this "cream puff" diet. I partly appreciated this but was unwilling to admit it. I tried to muster up courage to face the winter at the offices, persuaded myself that I had succeeded, and went back. I stayed for an hour—Marks was out—and then fled ingloriously before he returned. . . .

Worthington says that I was so tired of loafing that

I needed a vacation. Perhaps he is right. . . .

п

I drifted about in this state of mind for over a week, like a boy who knows that he is hopelessly late for school and hopes that something will turn up that will prevent his going at all A fire, a runaway horse—anything. I became pathetically eager for excuses to postpone my return to work. I started canvases which I knew would never be finished. The Ledyards left suddenly and I saw to the hauling out of their boat and was glad of the chance. That killed two days. I seized on other petty excuses and finally began to manufacture my own. I found fault with the grading about the new house and planned to have the eastern slope altered. I even engaged teamsters. Then I met Cadberry.

Sudden changes in society bring hitherto unnoticed persons to the surface. I hadn't noticed Cadberry all summer, neither had I missed him, for that matter. He nodded an abstracted greeting as I entered the deserted lounge of the club, then resumed the reading of his paper. Somehow or other I was conscious of a feeling that he shouldn't be there; only after we had read in silent companionship for an hour did I remember his exploration plans.

"You're back, then," I said, as he folded and refolded his paper, making ineffectual efforts to straighten it. Evidently his absence had failed to improve his temper. "Back? Haven't been away," he grunted and fixed me with a cold blue eye.

I became explanatory. "You were going exploring—Mexico, was it? I've missed you."

He smiled grayly. "I suspect that you have been busy with other matters. I've been here all summer—summer's no time for tropical exploration." His manner added, "Any fool would know that."

But I was persistent. "Then this winter—" I left the thread hanging in the air; he plucked at it as one plucks at an irritating spider web.

"Sabbatical year," he said shortly. "Grahame takes the department. And Mexico is off the map, as far as I'm concerned."

I caught the headlines of his paper—something about the Madero-Huerta squabble, if I remember rightly.

"I know," I said sympathetically. "The pot's always boiling down there, isn't it? What were you planning this time? Aztec stuff, or——" I made a prodigious leap of memory "—some of the Toltec ruins? I know that they're thickly scattered all over the place."

"Not much left besides ruins in Mexico in a few years," he said with a show of interest. "No, not Toltec—Mayan.
. . . But I had no idea that you were interested in that."

"I excavated a ruin once," I answered, with fond memories of Brown Brothers. "Tell me about it—unless you've something else to do."

"Do?" he echoed. "I'm stuck here for the winter. But if you're really interested——"

"I am," I assured him. I was in a state of mind where anything is interesting.

"Why then—" he said, and cleared his throat in a class room manner which took me back fifteen years.

He started by explaining in words of one syllable just what he had intended to search for—he adopted an air of apology as he talked, and "as you know," answered by a nod from me, was a frequent punctuation of his discourse. The Mayan race, it seemed, had once occupied the region about Yucatan; they had built cities without number, palaces, temples, pyramids. Then, going the way of all flesh, they had left the cities behind. In the course of time the cities had become ruins. And ruins were Cadberry's meat.

"They built Palenque, Mitla, Copan," he explained. "The wilderness is full of them—cities which were ruins when Cortez landed, cities contemporaneous with Carthage, the cradles of a vast and vanished civilization."

"Ah!" I said intelligently. I had been in Baltimore after the fire, and I am afraid that my ideas of ruined cities were not exactly those which Cadberry intended to produce. I found later that a true ruined city is nothing more than occasional and unexpected little hills and mounds and embankments, mixed with broken pottery and shattered stone.

He went on and became more technical as he proceeded. He grew lyrical; liquid names filled with soft sibilants tumbled in procession from his tongue. He made mention of those who had already explored this Mayan country—Stephens, Waldeck, Dupaix and the others; my interest grew as he went on. In broad, vivid strokes he sketched the country; interminable forests, rivers among great hills and the ruins of a great past scattered through it all with a prodigal hand. One of my boyhood inspirations had been Du Chaillu's Gorilla Country and an account of Stanley's search for Livingstone; I raked together what fragments of memory I could and managed to make a decent show of intelligence.

"But you say that these places have already been explored," I objected.

"Not all," he responded, and pulled down the great coast chart on the wall. He traced a river with a slender forefinger. "Along here are the known ruins, behind Tabasco."

"Hot place," I jested feebly.

"No-o," he considered soberly, "save in the summer months, you know."

He went on to outline his abandoned plans, forgetting for the moment that they were abandoned. He indicated a great branching river, entering the Gulf of Campeche at Frontera; along the left branch were the known ruins. He explained that one obtained river boats and guides at San Juan Bautista-rather a common excursion, I gathered from his tone. But along the other branch, leading off to the eastward—ah! He sighed and realized that he talked of impossibilities.

"Somewhere in there," he said wistfully, "lies the solution of this entire Mayan problem. This river, the Usumacinta, leads off into the heart of an unknown regionarcheologically—unexplored, a virgin field. Along the affluents of the Usumacinta there lies—no one knows what. They lead back—into the hills. . . . There is a tradition of a great aboriginal city; it has been seen at times. From a distance. . . . Gleaming walls. . . . You don't know how such things appeal to me, Coffin."

"I think I know," I answered. I had once planned to explore the upper Amazon—but Dick wouldn't go. "And

you had planned?"

"It's no use now," he said wearily. "These damnable tupenny revolutions! The country's not safe, you know. I had planned to have a go at that region, engage boats

at Frontera, go as far as possible—bah!"

He pulled angrily at the map and it snapped up on its rollers with a clatter. "I've planned all summer," he went on, "hoping that this trouble would be over. But it seems to grow worse. . . . I'm not a British citizen now—only a Gringo. I'd have a try at it even now, but Mrs. Cad-

I understood. "But let's have another look at the map. Why not try it from Belize? Or Guatemala? Isn't that nearer?"

"In actual miles—yes. But impossible. There are no

streams—no roads. No. The only way is up river. That or none."

He subsided into disgruntled silence. I thought. The first faint glimmerings of a plan became apparent to me.

"You'd need a launch," I considered. "Something on the whaleboat plan, shallow draught and yet a good carrier. I think Evans has something on that line. And then to get there—where was it? Frontera? Why not the Shadow?"

"Eh?" He looked up and removed his glasses with a fumbling hand.

"Why not the Shadow?" I repeated. "We could run up river beyond your town and then start. Send the Shadow out to either Havana or Kingston. Or cache her somewhere. Go up river as far as we could, then come back. Well?"

He squinted at me nervously. "You mean it?"

"I'm about due for a sabbatical year myself," I answered.

## ш

From that moment I was completely in Cadberry's toils. I remember that he did a little war dance of joy about the lounge and then tore off to New Haven to crow over Grahame and get together what things he would need. He came back the next day; we took the *Shadow* down to New York, laid up at a smelly pier on the East River and started a whirlwind campaign of preparation.

Cadberry surprised me. He became a small dynamo of energy, deciding matters in a summary manner of which I had never believed him capable. I became a mere supernumerary; a person who was perhaps a necessary part of the general scheme of things but whose suggestions were sometimes absurd and sometimes childish but never well made. My idea of preparation was to lay in a stock of calico and beads; "to trade with the natives,"

I explained vaguely. Kavenaugh had no suggestions beyond plenty of tobacco and an extra pair of boots. We were both shoved one side without ceremony. We were trusted to a certain extent, however; Cadberry allowed us to open the cases as they came down the dock.

Within a week we were fully prepared and ready to move on. Evans remodeled a launch that he had in stock and made it suitable for our purposes. We shipped extra gasoline tanks and stores. It was a week of hurry and bustle, with Cadberry dominating the whole, his pockets bulging with odds and ends, a greasy old cap of Kavenaugh's on the back of his head and eternally engaged in a fumbling conflict with his glasses.

Stowell came down, criticized us openly, and envied us in secret.

"All very complete," he said, surveying our preparations. "I see only one thing wrong."

"And that?"

"You've no business going. In fact, there's every reason why you shouldn't go."

"For example?"

He hesitated oddly. "The Stores is too big a thing for one man to swing. And you know it," he said finally. "If you want a change of work—well, our offer is still open."

I was sulkily silent.

"Go ahead, then," he sighed, and switched to practical advice on the subject of woolen socks.

Marks was even worse. He argued.

"Look here," he exploded, as I appeared. "When you coming in?"

"When I get back."

He stared. "Back? From where?"

I told him. Then a whirlwind of questions—chiefly "Why?"

"Because I want to," I said doggedly.

"All right, all right. Stay as long as you want. Stay forever." I marched out, secretly pleased at getting off

so easily. But later Marks came down to the Shadow and was unexpectedly agreeable. I was ashamed of myself

and tried to explain.

"No matter," he said with an expansive wave. "I wouldn't understand, anyway. Guess I can get along alone—I've had practice enough. But one thing; I'm going ahead. I've got plans. No use holding up everything because of your crazy ideas."

"Go as far as you like," I assented.

"I will," he promised.

And, to do him justice, he did. . . .

During the latter part of the week I found time to run up river and see Lauretta. I had written her an account of our project, and, as I had expected, she also disapproved of the entire affair. We walked—I have an impression of towers in the background and drifts of rustling leaves underfoot—and discussed the matter in a fragmentary fashion.

"What I don't like," she explained, "is that I can't

go."

Obviously she couldn't.

"And I can't even write to you," she complained finally. But her principal objection was that she was going to miss something.

IV

I give you no more than a brief outline of that winter and spring; Cadberry has already treated it fully in his book; I feel that it is his story and not mine. This is really the second book in which I have figured, you see, although in Cadberry's I play but a small and unimportant part. My name appears once in the preface and twice in the main portion of his volume. Mention is made of my discovery of the colossal statue of Votan, the mythical founder of the Mayan race; happily Cadberry knew nothing of the abject feeling of terror which came over me

as I became aware of old Votan leering most horribly above me in the dimness of the jungle, leaning drunkenly aslant against a great tree. One of the illustrations in Cadberry's book shows Kavenaugh and myself, sweat stained and bearded, standing on either side of the hideously carved stone.

There was an absurdly piratic tone about the whole venture, from the time we stole around Sandy Hook in the twilight until we returned the next June. Cadberry stayed below, heroically alternating between his notebooks and a basin, until we passed Hatteras. We made but one call on the way down, to renew our supply of gasoline, and then, skirting the Florida Keys, we struck out into the Gulf.

We took our time crossing the Gulf, changing our course frequently as distant thumb-prints of smoke blurred the taut horizon. We had no desire for unsolicited publicity. We unshipped the *Shadow's* masts, lashed them on deck, and went over the entire superstructure with a coat of dull green. Bergson had argued us into accepting the plan which we had considered dubiously.

"You find a creek, a bayou, somewhere," he said, "and run her in. I will stay. Otherwise—if I dake her to Havana—how should I know when to return. And there

would be comblications-inevidably."

We spent an anxious three days while he and Kavenaugh went up river in the tender looking for a suitable place of concealment; during the day we stood out beyond sight of land, and at night crept in close to the low shore and showed lights. They came aboard the third night, and under their guidance we stole silently up the river, hugging the opposite shore as we passed Frontera and barely avoiding a collision with a native boat as we swung out into midstream again. Once we hung on a sandbar, but the wash of the river freed us and we went on. We reached the branching of the river and the stars wheeled overhead as we bore to the left. Toward morning we

pumped out the last of the water ballast and headed into the narrow channel which Kavenaugh had discovered. A sluggish stream, it meandered about among the overhanging trees; as we went on hanging vines dragged slowly across the deck and fell in festoons behind us. In the dim morning light it was like sailing through the heart of the forest on a heavy dew. Finally the channel led into a shallow, green-walled opening among the trees and in a subsidiary channel leading from this we hid the Shadow, with her bow wedged between two trees and a

heavy curtain of creepers veiling her stern.

For two months we struggled upstream in the launch, traveling principally by night until we left the flat lower reaches of the river and then pushing on more boldly. We met other travelers, a mysterious German connected with chicle, a native boat loaded with skins, a drive of mahogany logs, and for three days we traveled in company with a rubber prospector who spoke wistfully and feelingly of Cleveland-Sixth-City. Cadberry resurrected his English accent and was vaguely representative of a London rubber company. We parted company at last, laden with messages and directions to other rubber seekers further upstream—valuable information, for we took pains to avoid them. Beyond Santa Rosa we left the Usumacinta, turned into the Rio de la Pasion, and went on through fast narrowing banks of greenery into the heart of the unnamed hills.

The Rio de la Pasion proved a disappointment. I may be wrong, but it is my belief that Cadberry had expected to find it a New World Rhine, with ruined battlements and towers frowning down on every turn. That, at least, was my anticipation. But whatever he expected, we found nothing. We loitered along, exploring every side stream, making fruitless excursions back from the stream, and finding nothing. Cadberry grew daily more irritable. Our sole discovery was an abandoned rubber camp which classed as a ruin but was scarcely of sufficient antiquity

to interest Cadberry. This was a few miles below the second rapids—we had ascended the first series only after three days' killing labor. The second series proved impassable for our heavy launch.

V

We sat on the water-worn rocks, the launch pulled out on a half moon of yellow sand below us, our ears filled with the strident roar of the falls. Cadberry broke his seventh pair of glasses and swore as the fragments tinkled and glittered to the sand below.

"Well?" I asked.

"I hate to turn back," he said fretfully and was silent for a moment. "Why not strike out cross country circle around and come back? We've found nothing."

"How far?"

"Until we do find something," he squeaked above the tumult of falling water. "Are you on?"

"If Kav and Karl and John agree," I shouted back.

He strode off, gesticulating to himself, toward the three men sprawled about the fire on the beach. Kavenaugh had fallen overboard that morning and made a weird figure, clothed in a tattered and flapping undershirt. I sat and watched the circling clots of yellow foam in the pool below. We couldn't very well go back empty handed.

VI

From that point on we had one unending struggle with the passive resistance of the wilderness, over ranges, through valleys deep in tangled underbrush and primeval forests, across streams and past lakes hidden deep in abrupt valleys.

Whatever taste I possessed for the romance of exploration was glutted. Certain impressions are burned deep in my memory—of "boots—boots—boots—boots—movin"

up and down again"; of stumbling on and watching the sweat stains on Karl's back merge and blend and blot together; of pack-straps cutting into my own back and shoulders until sensation vanished in a blissful numbness. Exploration! I could have got the same effect by carrying a truck load of mixed goods through a mosquito infested blueberry swamp with scattered ridges of loose stone to break the heat-drenched monotony.

We found outcroppings of coal and metal; for nearly a month we traveled in sight of one vast mountain of iron ore, rearing rusty shoulders above its cloak of green. At the foot of this mountain, or rather on its western slope, lies the mystical, mythical city whose existence Cadberry had doubted. And rightly, too, for instead of a city we found a broad, filmy waterfall, whose gleaming in the sun might well be mistaken for the glisten of silver walls in the blue distance. It was a great disappointment to Kavenaugh; he had taken the distant murmur of the falls for the roar of a great city and had entertained visions of bottled beer.

But we found cities—three of them—as Cadberry says at great length. Quite properly, he named them after Mayan gods; Kavenaugh, more rationally and perhaps with memories of Mark Twain, called them Jacksonville, West Jacksonville, and Jacksonville Junction. As cities they were lamentable failures; as ruins they lacked nothing. Cadberry dug and excavated and measured the unsightly heaps and mounds and pyramids to his heart's content. My chief recollections of this most successful part of our trip are connected with the cenote which we found at Jacksonville, a shaft leading down among the ruins by dim, worn steps to an underground pool, dim, cool and soul-satisfying.

Near West Jacksonville we found the statue of Votan; we stayed at Jacksonville Junction nearly two months.

## VII

We had spent a week about the Junction, prying into the ruins and making little side excursions; a week of torrential showers, marching one on the heels of the other, with flashes of vivid sunshine between. We alternated between complete wetness and soggy steaminess. Karl and John played cards and swore that they had rather be drowned at sea than on land. Kavenaugh and I found our only comfort in the thought that further discomfort was impossible. Cadberry was so engrossed in making maps and taking notes that nothing short of a cloudburst would have attracted his attention. Through rain and through sunshine I remember his twinkling little legs trotting about, for all the world like a busy little fox terrier in a bone yard.

We rested at noon one day, between showers, beside a pool with broad water lilies starring its surface; mysterious subsurface movements set the broad leaves rocking and the rushes nodding and swaying as though moved by some breeze imperceptible to our grosser senses. There was an elusive glimpse of the great red-flanked mountain in the misty background; in the middle distance Kavenaugh fried bacon and an intermittent crackle and rustle told of Karl seeking dry wood for the fire. I sniff, and smell again the queer blend of tropical rankness and appetizing bacon.

Cadberry elucidated some abstruse theory of his—some connection which he had found between Eastern and Western theology. I rested drowsily and listened to his monologue.

"'Just and true is the Wheel, swerving not a hair,'" he said with an air of quotation. "'Swerving not a hair.'"

"Mayan?" I queried.

"Thibetan. . . . Yes. . . . Not a bad idea. Christianity has much the same idea—'as ye measure.' Universal, spontaneous, perhaps, rather than showing a connec-

tion. In everything-coming back-reverting to type. Wilderness-cultivation-wilderness again. 'Just and true.' Hmmmm."

The outlines of a lecture shaped themselves in disconnected fragments; he fumbled for the little red notebook. He seemed unduly excited over his discovery; a tiny red spot burned in either cheek.

"The cause is a result—the result, a cause," he went on, scratching notes. "The circles-the spheres. Circles."

"Cubist art," I reminded him.

There was a whir of wings overhead and a minor shower of drops pattered on the leaves of his book. He stared

at the crinkling blots.
"D-dammit!" he said querulously, and poked at them "They're not circles; they should be with his finger. . . . all broken." He stared for a moment, the red flush burned higher on his cheeks and the book slid rustling down into the grass.

"Ah!" he said finally.

I followed his intent gaze out over the little pool; a fish had leaped and a slow circular spread of ripples broke the clear surface.

He rose slowly, staggered, caught his balance, and started down the slope to the pool, breaking into a shambling trot as the bank fell away more rapidly. I watched him idly, expecting him to stop at the edge; he went on, and was knee deep before I realized that something out of the ordinary was happening.

"Cadberry!" I shouted. "You fool!"

His arms spread wide and waved in flapping circles as the sludgy bottom caught at his feet; he gesticulated wildly as he waded deeper; finally his momentum toppled him over and he disappeared in a wild splashing and waving of weed tangled legs.

I shouted again and had an impression of Kavenaugh dropping his bacon in the fire and coming toward me. I had the start of him; I remember shifting my stride as

I ran, calculating the distance to the edge and praying for a solid take-off. "Dead trees," I thought, and had a flashing vision of spitting myself on a sunken branch. I remember striking the water in a long flat dive and coming up abruptly with the gagging taste of dead and rotting vegetation in my throat. I struck out after Cadberry and found boots and puttees a poor swimming costume.

He was swimming blindly when I overtook him, his head raised high and his threshing arms beating the water into an amber froth. He fought weakly and scratchily, like a blind kitten, as I grappled with him from behind; I managed to tow him within reach of Kavenaugh, standing waist deep among the rushes, and between us we carried him up the bank.

"The fever," puffed Kavenaugh, looking down on Cadberry's flushed and streaming face. He shouted for Karl; an answering hail and a crackle of branches responded. "He was fair rotten with it and never yipped. All in a heap. . . . Back to camp as quick as God'll let us."

We got him back, finally, on an improvised stretcher, babbling thickly of circles and planetary systems and the potter's wheel, clutching weakly at the dripping underbrush as we forced our way along. He had one moment of lucidity.

"Got it bad," he croaked, fixing me with a bright blue eye. "Felt it coming—never say die. It runs in circles, Coff; in three-day cycles—had it before." He drifted off into inarticulate mutterings. "I'll pull through," he said suddenly. . . .

I was far from confident; Cadberry had resisted for so long, had gone on working when he should have gone to bed, that the disease attacked him with doubled vigor when he finally gave in. Kavenaugh and I tried every remedy of which we had ever heard; among them we must have found the right one—either that or Cadberry's con-

stitution triumphed over both disease and our blundering doctoring. He slid down hill for a time, hesitated, and then started slowly to recover. . . .

## VIII

The long nights among the ruins of Jacksonville Junction stand out clearest of all my memories of that time. We had camped in the very midst of the ruins, in what Cadberry has indicated on his map as "Casa Number Three," the most complete ruin which we had found or rather the most incomplete, for it was the only one with even a vestige of walls. It was a vast ruin of a palace, roofless, and with great trees thrusting up above the low walls. I remember the gleam of the firelight through the shattered doorway as I sat outside; there was an occasional sound from Cadberry, in his hammock under the rough shelter which we had constructed between the tree trunks; I recall the silver gleam of the moonlight on the fantastic carving of the great façade, the bushes growing in crevices and casting dusky hieroglyphic shadows over the carven stone. And all about was that silence of the forest which is not a silence at all, but a calm filled with rustlings and murmurs of unseen life.

This scene is impressed on my memory by repetition; night after night I sat there or walked up and down, smoking and thinking. With the suspension of physical activity came a recrudescence of my old self-questioning. I stood apart and criticized myself for the first time in years. I was isolated, cut off from everything which had been my life. Between the present and the careless, self-indulgent life about the Arrowrock there was an immeasurable interval. All that seemed years away. Business, The Stores, Marks—all were figures of another life, incredibly remote and distant. I contrasted, weighed one against the other, and finally came to some sort of a decision.

I came to see that in breaking off and running away from business I had really tried to escape from myself, not from The Stores and its accompaniment of petty and narrowing vexations. I had sought refuge in being different; my real refuge lay in becoming like others. Being different was the cause, not the cure, of my trouble. . . .

I wonder now how much Lauretta had to do with this decision. I know that by subtle gradations she came to occupy more and more of my thoughts. She became daily more desirable. I began to imagine things, after my usual fashion; to remember and build up possibilities on what I remembered. For the first time I had no doubts of my love for her. It was as sincere and real an emotion as any I have ever experienced. I wanted with all my soul to go back, and be married, and call the brakeman on the 8.17 by his first name. Every one whose way differs at all from the ordinary feels at times this envy of the common lot, this desire to be ordinary and humdrum—and contented. . . .

I would go back, I concluded. No more running away from work, shirking responsibility, clutching at trifles. I had taken that course long enough. Self-indulgence breeds self-contempt. I became articulate.

"You idiot!" I accused myself, with the steady stars and the sibilant forest as witnesses. "This running about

-trying to escape yourself!

"Fussing around. . . . Inconsequential little voyages from nowhere to nowhere; persuading yourself that you're doing something. And doing nothing. . . . Doddering—a combination of child and old man. . . . Sand castles.

"Simply drifting—down here making a pack-beast of yourself. And it's not even fun; just killing time. Letting Marks do it all. And you had dreams once."

Then a pause in my pacing up and down. I began to dream again, to futurize. I remembered Marks and his plans, wondered faintly what they were and hoped that

he wouldn't make too great an ass of himself. I planned for myself—later I captured Cadberry's red notebook and jotted them down; they puzzled him greatly when he came to decipher his notes. With a quickened interest I thought of Stowell and his persistent efforts to interest me in his work.

"Something in it," I concluded. "At least that wouldn't be pandering to yourself."

IX

Cadberry was soon strong enough to move—these wiry little wisps of men are hard to kill—and we set out northward in easy stages. As near as we could determine by the map we were midway between the second rapids and Flores. We went on; anything was better than a return. Late in April we reached Lake Peten Oritza, making the final stages of the journey with Cadberry in a crawling bullock cart, hired at the first village we entered. We went winding down through the mountains, the cart lurching and complaining over the gullies and bowlder strewn torrent beds—called roads only by the utmost stretch of the imagination—and a brown skinned mestizo, all smile and hat brim, driving the oxen.

"Scandalous, I call him," said Kavenaugh. "Like a bloody Chink, with his shirt tail outside his panties."

At Flores—a little jewel of a town, set on an island in the lake—we lodged at a house which the curé found for us, a house with blank walls facing the street, a great grill of rusty iron work in the dim arch of the gate and a little walled garden fronting on the lake. Father José also found us a cook, a voluble old soul with two teeth and the skill of an angelic alchemist. We ate and rested and shaved every day and gradually came to feel almost civilized again. Cadberry went through his convalescence in a great square dusky room above stairs, a room with shaded windows framing the distant panorama of the

mountains and the reflected light of the lake shimmering on the ceiling. He was weaker than he cared to admit.

But he found a companion soul in Father José and became reconciled to the slow mending process. The curé was an authority on Mayan legends and archeology; he filled out the gaps in Cadberry's information and in return received a broader view of the entire subject. He and Cadberry made a queer pair, the curé with his great bony shoulders and rough hewn Yankee face, and Cadberry, white beneath his brown beard, both leaning over rough maps spread on the counterpane.

"But you are tired, pobrecito," he would exclaim penitently. "My selfishness; you know so much that I do not. Till to-morrow, my son." Then, despite Cadberry's protestations of strength, he would sweep up the scattered maps and papers and stride out with his long, plunging noiseless stride. Cadberry would fume and

fret for a while and then fall asleep. . . .

In Flores I made one discovery which outranks even Votan. In my wanderings about the town I stumbled on a store, set in an obscure corner of the plaza, the most abject apology for a store imaginable. An awning of grain sacks protected the front; within was a shelf, darkness and things which scuttled underfoot and squeaked. And, in splendid isolation on the shelf, flanked by supporters of nameless goods, stood a can of Store stuff, buff binder, black elephant and all. I stared at it in amazement, read the label, recognized it as one of an unsuccessful lot which we had disposed of at auction. I bought it, as one rescues a friend from captivity, bore it home and gloated over it. I became fretful and worried and in a hurry to get back. . . .

We left Flores regretfully and set off in a hired native boat, across the lake and down the San Pedro, another tributary of the Usumacinta. It was vastly different from our ascent of the river; we went along boldly, slipping between high banks, with Cadberry, very weak and white, working away on his notes under a canopy. One thing alone marred the journey; one of the boatmen brought with him an accursed instrument of two strings and we had Sobra las Olas for a steady diet.

We found the Shadow very foul and weed-grown, matted with vines and creepers until she seemed part of the forest. Bergson, bearded now like Santa Claus, peered out through a loop hole in the vines at the stern in answer to our hail. "I hat become almost tired of reading," he admitted huskily, in answer to our questions. "Yes, everything is all right." No, he was not particularly glad to see us. He had got along fairly well; he even seemed reluctant to leave. "There is one long devil of a cat who trinks at a spring up there," he remarked as we hacked away at the clinging growth. "Every night he comes down to trink and goes away laughing at me deep down in his belly. And every night I have waited for him-mit a rifle. Now," and he sighed regretfully, "we shall never meet. He would have looked nice on the barlor floor at home."

And Kavenaugh-Kavenaugh dove past Bergson and down the hatch to the engine room, and from time to time the sound of his low and joyous profanity floated up to us. All that day and the better part of the night he worked over them, scraping off the thick layer of gudgeon with which he had smeared them, testing and readjusting and getting himself most gloriously coated with grease. Finally, with the help of the crew of our river boat, we wrenched free from the little inlet and wound down the tortuous channel to the main stream. Here we paid off the boatmen, loaded them down with what supplies we could spare, and sent them off upstream, happy. Over the Waves floated back to us, grew fainter and fainter, and finally dwindled away to silence as they crept around a turn of the river and vanished. Thank God we had heard the last of that!

We went out as we had entered—in the night; past the

sleeping town and out to sea. All the way across the Gulf—we stopped at Key West to telegraph ahead—Bergson made up for his long silence by talking a steady stream.

In New York, topping the immense pile of mail which had accumulated during my absence, I found a telegram from Lauretta. It was then late in June, and the Annersleys had gone down to one of the Maine coast towns to start the summer. I was to come down in the Shadow and join them, I gathered. She had so much to tell me.

x

So I came back, filled with this resolution to turn over a new leaf. It was good to be back again. I was tired of living as I had lived, tired of loafing and persuading myself that I was contented. I wanted to get into harness again. For the first time in years I found myself looking forward eagerly to the prospect of going back to the offices. I was in a Walt Whitmanesque mood, happy to be jostled and shoved about the sidewalks, envying the passers their part in the vast comedy of labor. I stopped on street corners and watched them; ceaseless streams of people, happy in doing something and happily unaware that they were happy. I had been away for years, exiled. I returned to find nothing changed.

There was one change. This was in Marks. He had grown sallow and thinner during the winter, not only thinner but actually shrunken. Two great creases had appeared on either side of his mouth, drawing down the corners; the skin of his cheeks hugged close to the bone beneath. His face was that of a distance runner, drawn and distorted and strained.

He met me at the door of the inner office, a great sheaf of papers in his hand.

"Well!" he said, and stared at me.

"You're not looking well, Marks," I said.

# FLOOD TIDE

"I been sick," he said briefly and turned back into the office.

I gave him a brief outline of our trip and hinted awk-wardly at my new resolution.

"So you're back for good?"

"Not yet," I qualified. "Give me one more month. I'll be back not later than the first of August."

He hesitated, opened his mouth, and then made a weary gesture of assent.

"That's a good date," he said.

### CHAPTER THE THIRD

1

Marks' attitude puzzled me faintly. He had been obviously surprised to see me, almost disconcerted. Then he had been relieved when I had asked for another month. And yet not relieved; he had made some further remark about the first of August which I hadn't caught. I puzzled over it and then forgot it. I had something else to think about. I was glad to be back, pleased with my determination to return to work. The first of August would see the beginning of a new era for me.

"I've got some good ideas," I had boasted. "This month will give me a chance to work them up. Then we'll

make things hum."

"Good," he had commented. "I—I'm beginning to find that we need you."

Marks had his limitations, I thought. We all discov-

ered them, sooner or later.

This mood of self-satisfaction persisted with me all that week; the *Shadow* was hauled out at Evans' and I bustled about and sang little songs to myself and convinced myself that I was really a reformed man. It was still with me when we turned northward toward Maine and Lauretta. In fact, I have come to the conclusion that despite my quibbling little fits of restlessness I was an extraordinary self-satisfied person during all these later years. This was merely the flowering of the mood.

I remember this particular mental state as I remember my Olympian-mooded decisions regarding the world in general during my first year at Hatherly's in Boston, as something connected with another man than myself. I had not changed to any great extent, you see. Then I was satisfied with the result of my musings on the world in general as seen in the light of my young wisdom; now I was satisfied with my deliberations on that center of the universe, myself. That was the sole change; my horizon had narrowed, self had been substituted for the world. I wonder if we all make this substitution as we grow older.

We had endless trouble with the motors as we went up through the Sound; they had given us a great deal of bother as we came north from Frontera, but now they seemed governed by some imp of perverseness. Cod they went back on us entirely, and for six hours we lay rolling in a wicked welter of cross rips while Kavenaugh toiled and grunted below; the long gleaming lines of the barren dunes were very near when he finally got them turning in a half-hearted manner. For once Kavenaugh admitted that the problem was beyond his experience and at his suggestion we ran into Boston and had the entire power plant overhauled.

We lay off Fort Point Channel for three days while Kavenaugh and a fellow craftsman delved into the depths of the motors in search of the trouble. This made an annoying break in the course of events, not only because I was eager to get on, but because it was an interruption. I wanted to keep moving, to get busy at something, no matter what. Finally I dug out a sheaf of reports which Marks had given me and busied myself in catching up with

the progress of The Stores.

We sailed again on a gray, leaden day, the great gray pinnacle of the Customs House looming ever fainter and fainter behind us in the wreaths of mist which drifted in from the lower harbor. We stole on at half speed-Kavenaugh was still unsatisfied with the performance of the starboard motor—out past the huddle of islands to the right of the channel and so through Broad Sound to the open sea. It was thicker outside; the shore faded and vanished and the intermittent bellow from the harbor came more faintly as the Shadow met the first long swells and turned northward through the wet grayness. I went below and took up Marks' tabulations and records again. An hour—two hours; I lost track of time in my endeavors to regain my grasp on the course of events. I made the discovery that the records ended with January—Marks' omission, no doubt. Gradually I became aware of a change in our motion. The hum and throb of the motors had died away and in the stead of this regular beat of sound came the chuckle of the waves as they slapped the side and gurgled away under the counter. As I listened, the Shadow slid up the back of one long roller, and, tobogganing down the slope, dug her slim bow into the next gray-back and sent a swirl of green water over her deck, licking at the panes of the skylight overhead.

I found Kavenaugh on his knees before the silent mass of machinery. He answered my question with a monosyllabic grunt and continued his search, choosing first one and then another from the battery of tools beside him on the floor. He squatted back on his heels and held up for my inspection two bits of steel.

"Must have been cracked and out of alignment for a long time," he said. "See the old break and the new one? That's what threw the whole business on the fritz—and that Boston duck thought it was the timing." He spat contemptuously in the grease pan and slowly erected himself. "Lucky I got her shut off."

"A shore job?" I asked.

He nodded. "Oxy-acetylene. Got to be welded, or a new part. We can run back or—where are we, Cap?" Bergson had turned the idle wheel over to Karl and come below to investigate.

With narrowed eyes Bergson considered. "Five miles out, and at half-speed—on the chart is a place called Whitehaven which seems nearest. We could go back, but with one propeller——" He shrugged his shoulders.

"There's a shop there," Kavenaugh remembered. "I got some babbit there when we stopped four years ago. We'd better try it."

He translated my nod of assent, and telling Bergson to put her hard aport until we found how she acted under a single thrust, started the remaining motor.

I hesitated for a moment and then followed Bergson to the wheel house. This abrupt intrusion of Whitehaven startled me; since my father's death I had scarcely thought of the town—so completely had it passed from my memory that I had forgotten that we must pass by on the way north. But here were the familiar outlines on the chart, the long sweep of the beach, the jagged line of the Point and even Buck's Island, a tiny dot to the northward. I managed to work up quite a decent feeling of reminiscence. Not such a bad place after all; we had had good times there, Dick and myself—and Bess. This last thought came quite unpremeditated, as one thinks of something dead and gone. There was no visualization; I merely remember that I remembered her.

The fog lifted slightly as we drew in near shore; through a rift we caught a fugitive glimpse of the Point. Behind it and across the harbor, the steeples and tips of the trees on the hill stood out dim and flat against their background of gray. Nearer at hand was the outer buoy of the channel, dipping and curtseying in the long rollers which made a hidden thunder on the rocks of the Point.

Then the mist closed in again, and in dead whiteness we entered the harbor, feeling our way blindly along the line of buoys. We anchored, and the rattle of the chain echoed back to us from the wharves; from the deck we sensed rather than saw the nearness of the shore. Only the dense black shadows below the wharves seemed real; above that the town was plane on plane of shadowy illusion, fading away into the wet, thin blankness of the upper air.

Kavenaugh swung the tender outboard and lowered her; I watched him idly, hesitating between two forces. He bent over to twirl the flywheel, and, on an impulse, I stepped in beside him. п

I left Kavenaugh at Harding's yards—no longer Harding's, however, but with a great dingy sign of another name across the street fence. Beside the weater-beaten, unpainted shed, the womb from which so many trim seachildren had gone forth, stood another building, a squat structure of dusty brick filled with the clinking and clanging of beaten iron and the spurting light of forges.

I went back to the landing where we had left the tender, hesitated a moment at the entrance of the wharf, and then turned off into the misty byways of the town The same sleepy old town, unchanged—never would change, I imagined. It was a dead backwater in the stream of life; the

main current passed by and left it undisturbed.

I passed the store, unchanged save for broad plate glass expanses replacing the many paned windows which had been so hard to wash. The old sign was still over the door, the letters raised now where wind and weather had eaten away the unprotected wood between. Through the window I caught a fleeting glimpse of Grigsby, scratching his head and yawning over an account book at the old desk. He turned toward the window and I went away—hastily. But for the drift of circumstance I might have been in Grigsby's place myself. I wondered what he would have made of the reports which I had just been looking over. Poor Grigsby! I felt sorry for him; I felt sorry for Whitehaven; I wondered how long it would take Kavenaugh to have his welding done. I found the town depressing.

But still, I supposed that these moribund places had their part in the general scheme of affairs. If nothing more, they offered landmarks by which we could judge our progress. I was faintly pleased at having found some

justification for Whitehaven's existence.

Almost instinctively my feet turned into the old familiar way from the store to the house. Nothing had

changed; the old houses stood just as much out of alignment as ever, turned sideways toward one another with the air of exchanging furtive and disparaging comments on the passerby. Here and there a new structure had elbowed in between or replaced one of the older houses. . . . I imagined that the life of these people was still much the same as when I had left; a petty round of neighborhood gossip, a dull chronicle of births and deaths and little inconsequentialities.

This stupidly intolerant mood lasted me all the way up the hill and vanished only when I saw the old house looming ahead through the mist. The horse chestnut tree still stood, crownless, but with its lower branches masses of sturdy green. Below it the roof shone faintly green with moss. White curtains veiled the windows; in my time, I remembered, the curtains had always been a dusty and neglected yellow. The house had been painted, too, evidently Captain Waldron had taken good care of it. There were the same old lilacs on either side of the front walk, and it comes back to me, as a minor memory, that the flower beds along the walk were wet and black with the drifted fog on their eastern sides and brown and crumbly and dry on the west.

I felt rather foolish as I lifted the knocker and sent the echoes rumbling through the house. Perhaps Captain Waldron had rented the house to some acid-voiced old maid who would mistake me for a book agent. In my mind I framed an excuse for my intrusion; I would say—The door opened.

A slim figure with blue eyes beneath a piled mass of coppery brown hair looked gravely out at me, one eyebrow lifted in interrogation. I stammered, gasped, and stood silent.

It was Elizabeth.

#### Ш

Her look of questioning changed to a smile of recognition. She laughed, doubtless at my bewildered look.

"Hello!" she said frankly. "Come in."

She stepped back into the shadows of the narrow hall, and by some strange and involuntary process my feet carried me in.

"I had no idea you were in town," she said easily, closing the door and following me into the living room.

"Nor I you," said a voice which must have been mine.
"So I judged." I surrendered my hat, which I had held in a clutch of desperation. She stepped back into the hall to dispose of it.

"You find things changed—greatly?" she asked, returning. "You must; I've changed things a little here,

you see."

"Indeed you have. But the town hasn't changed greatly from what I've seen of it."

"You've just arrived?"

"Within a half hour." "Motor?" she queried.

"The Shadow—no, not the old sixteen footer," as she looked up abruptly. "This is another one."

"Oh! And you came directly here? Or did you exhaust

the possibilities of the town in half an hour?"

"Why-" I seemed on the defensive. "It seemed the

natural thing to do, I suppose."

She nodded, and in some subtle manner I felt myself under the unspoken indictment of always choosing the most natural and easiest course.

Our talk slid off into banalities at this point—the weather and subjects of that sort which people discuss for the purpose of filling a silence. I found time to look about me and take in these changes which she had proclaimed. At first I appreciated the change as a whole, as an atmosphere unconnected with my former remem-

brances, but as I gradually recalled the room as it had been in our old days of disordered and slovenly house-

keeping the changes came home to me.

Some one with an artistic sense had been busy about the old house. Bess? I wondered. The brown paint which had adorned the woodwork with whorls and impossible waves of false graining had been covered with a dull white; the walls, once garish with huge roses, were now quiet gleaming expanses of dull yellow, topped with a slender border of deeper yellow and brown. In place of the old battered tobacco-strewn table the center of the room was occupied by a wicker work affair, with magazines and books and-final touch of femininity-an embroidery frame instead of the dusty confusion I remembered. The haircloth chairs with oak leaf carving cunningly calculated to offend the most vulnerable points of one's back had accompanied the table into oblivion. Rugs and polished wood replaced the rag carpets of yesterday; on the walls soft splotches of color had replaced—what had hung there? I searched my memory and brought forth a sense of Civil War engravings in black walnut frames and a series of Our Presidents behind a cracked glass—a series which had ended with Garfield. Only one thing of the old order remained, the great wing chair in which my father had lounged and smoked and made tobacco-scattering gestures; even that was covered with dull brown leather. This brought my gaze back to Bess. From the depths of the chair she had watched my inspection with calm and impersonal interest.

"You like it?" she asked. "I thought you would. Or perhaps you were looking for the parrot and cat? I haven't arrived at the parrot stage yet, but there's a cat,

unless you've frightened her out of town."

She leaned over and pursed her lips in a whistle; a gray, fluffy head peered out from beneath the table, followed by a striped, fat little body. Bess smoothed out her dress invitingly; the kitten leaped up with a little

purr of content, looked at me, looked at her, turned around twice and settled down to blink at me wisely.

She looked at me critically, through half closed eyes, her head leaned back aganst the dull leather of the chair. "You have changed a good deal. It may be just the shadows of the room, but your face seems brown on the forehead and white below. Is it just my imagination?"

"It does look strange," I admitted. "I've been south all winter—Central America, back in the woods. I let my beard grow; that's why I seem to be wearing a mask."

She leaned forward eagerly. "Did Dick ever go back there? He was planning to, you know. Perhaps you were together?"

"No. Dick's settled down now—married and meddling in government. This was just an exploring expedition in upper Gautemala."

"Then you didn't get as far as Argentina?" A faint smile hovered about her eyes.

"Argentina? No." I recalled faint memories. I had planned once to go to Argentina and return—— "You remember that?"

"I remember—many things." She scratched the kitten's ribs and it squirmed and purred in content. The smile vanished from about her eyes and a little line sprang up between them.

I sought some loose end in the tangled skein of the past, some loose end which we might unravel safely, sure that we would find nothing disagreeable at the end.

"But—Guatemala, you say?" she said presently. "Have you gone into the revolution business—or is it mining now? We hear very little of the world outside, you know."

"The town is as sleepy as ever, I suppose. About last winter—" I searched about for some point to start on. "But I'm keeping you from your work; don't let me interrupt you. You were cooking something?"

Her lifted eyebrows expressed surprise and mystification.

"Experience has taught me to connect a streak of flour on a woman's nose with cooking," I said, pleased with my deduction.

Her hand went up to her face. "I always get all smudged up," she laughed, surveying her hand and rubbing vigorously. "Yes; I was making cookies—ginger cookies. But that can wait."

"Ginger cookies?" I said with a fine wistfulness. "I haven't tasted one for years. I wish you'd go ahead and let me watch you."

"Just watch?" She dumped the kitten unceremoniously on the floor. "I'll make some extra ones, if you've been saving your appetite for years."

I followed her out into the kitchen, remembering to stoop as I passed through the low doorway and smiling to myself as I ducked my head. The old house had been built for a less altitudinous Coffin than myself, and my first intimation of approaching manhood had been a thump on the head from this same lintel.

It had been dark in the living room, shaded as it was beneath the chestnut tree and the thick woven pattern of misty green lilacs against the grayness outside. In the kitchen it was much lighter. Bess took up her interrupted labors at the low table before the window, motioning me to a low chair which I dimly recalled as having been part of our old kitchen equipment.

My chief memory of this unexpected and unsought meeting is that, after the first feeling of surprise wore off, there seemed nothing unexpected and unusual about it. I might have been away for a day, instead of twelve years. Bess was unchanged, changed for the better, if changed at all. Her somewhat angular outlines had filled out, her hair darkened a shade; only the little line which sprang out and disappeared between her brows was new. I even found myself skipping and avoiding subjects which prom-

ised to be unpleasant, just as I had before. And I followed my old custom of making awkward breaks.

"You haven't married again," I said. It was neither a question nor an assertion, rather a sudden thought which slipped out unintentionally.

She paused for a moment, with the mixing spoon poised

over the yellow bowl.

"No," she said, and the little line came into being. "Once was enough."

I cursed my clumsiness.

"And you?" she went on evenly.

"The same."

"Not married again?"

"Not for the first time." I took new courage and blundered on into a question which had perplexed me. "Your mother still lives in the Carver house? I should have thought——"

"She's dead," Bess said soberly. "Yes, I still own the house—it never got to be called the Alden house, did it? I rent it, you know, and pay rent here to Captain Waldron. There's a difference—enough to live on. Captain Waldron is very good; I don't know what I'd do without him."

I went on suddenly to the tale of the past winter. That was safe ground. I felt that she might ask questions about Captain Waldron's possession of the house. If she knew that I still owned it——

Darkness crept out from its lurking places in the corners as we talked; the mist changed to a fine drizzle of rain which dripped slowly from the eaves. Bess, a dark silhouette against the gathering grayness outside, laughed frequently as we recalled some absurd old memory, a low, full laugh which came easily and sincerely. I remembered her as seldom laughing in the old days. We talked of safe subjects; Stowell, the changes about town, old schoolmates, Captain Waldron. We avoided talk of ourselves. The Stores was an unavoidable subject; I even

told her how I had become tired of The Stores. She understood. But I didn't tell her that I was going back to work. That would have brought in Lauretta. I was trying to avoid unpleasant subjects, you see.

I gorged on ginger cookies and found their seductive flavor unimpaired by the passage of time. Finally she

sent me away.

"But I'll see you again before you leave town," she said as she switched on the hall light.

"You will," I asserted confidently. Had I planned to

leave as soon as possible? Or hadn't I? I forgot.

I looked back as I turned from the path to the sidewalk; she stood in the doorway looking after me, a slender figure seen through the golden drizzle against the light of the hall. The light went out; I turned up my coat collar and went on down the hill.

At the wharf I found Kavenaugh, disconsolately surveying the misty darkness from a dry shelter.

"You got the casting welded?" I asked as we swung

away toward the golden lights of the Shadow.

"They're sending to Boston for a tank of gas," he answered. "Have it to-morrow—perhaps. Swell place." He spat disdainfully over the side and gave the wheel a vicious twirl.

"No hurry. We may stay here a week."

He looked at me in some astonishment. "You were in a hurry to get away from Boston," he accused.

"I was born here, Kav," I explained.

He was silent. He whistled softly to himself and slowed down the motor as we drew alongside.

"Well, you've lived it down," he concluded dryly.

Sentiment was not in Kavenaugh. He failed to understand how good it was to come back home and revive old acquaintance.

### FLOOD TIDE

IV

Captain Waldron came out the next morning, sculling his little dory with sure and swift strokes. I found it difficult to get him to talk of Whitehaven matters at first, but finally, with a cigar held gingerly between his fingers, and his feet cocked up on the rail, I got him started.

Yes, Betsy had told him that I was here. He was seized

by a sudden thought.

"Say," he ejaculated, clearing his throat and giving signs of embarrassment. "Did you tell her that you owned the house? Or did you?"

"She thinks you own it," I answered. "No, I didn't tell

her."

He seemed relieved. "You knew she was there?"

"How should I?"

"Receipts was all signed E. Learoyd," he reminded me.

I have never thought of Bess as named Learoyd. Besides, I hadn't seen a receipt for over two years. My reputation as a business man suffered in Captain Billy's estimation through this admission.

"You'd better not tell her, then," he suggested. A blush spread through the tiny veins which etched his cheeks. "I thought I'd best not tell her that she was beholden to you for the rent—owing to the late unpleasantness. You see?"

T cow

"Thought you would," he sighed in relief, and became engrossed in watching a passing sloop.

"How long has she been here?" I asked.

"Came in yesterday," he answered absently, craning his neck to follow the sloop. "Run short of gasoline, I guess. Oh, Betsy, you mean?" He mumbled to himself and did some calculation on his fingers. "Five years come November," he announced. "We had the big icewall that year."

We were silent for a moment. "This Learoyd was a

bad egg, I guess," he volunteered. "That is, from what I hear of him."

"So?"

"Yes. Don't believe anybody stayed awake nights weeping for him." He chewed ferociously on his cigar and shot off at a tangent. "You're still writing your own sailing orders—ain't married yet?"

"Not yet," I answered.

After that I got but little out of him. He refused to enthuse as I showed him about the Shadow and was unimpressed by my Gautemalan experiences. At his insistence we went ashore and I was escorted in state to Coulter's Wharf and introduced to an early rising gathering of Captain Waldron's associates. They sat in a line along the front of the wharf, basking in the morning sun and squinting out under tilted hats at the craft in the harbor. Some of these men I remembered faintly as having been infrequent visitors in port during my youth.

We visited the store together, surprising Grigsby in a hasty lick-and-a-promise cleaning. He had made a few—pitifully few—timid changes since I had left him in charge and snatched eagerly at some changes which I proposed. Yes, he had thought of something like that, but he wasn't quite sure, he hadn't wanted to make any great changes without my permission, he had—— I understood, and arranged in a few moments for changes which my father would have considered and weighed for months. I felt a glow of satisfaction at my summary disposal of matters, and at the same time was conscious of a feeling of pity and contempt for Grigsby. Like the rest of Whitehaven, he was content to scrub along with antiquated methods.

I believe that Captain Waldron proposed that we go up to the old house; I should have suggested it if he hadn't. Now that Elizabeth had come back into my mind again I found myself dwelling more and more on old memories of her; long forgotten things quickened and took on the aspect of life again as we went slowly up the hill. Captain Waldron, despite his boasted spryness, found it convenient to stop here and there, ostensibly to point out changes in the town but really to regain his breath. I listened and commented at the wrong points; how had I ever forgotten Bess and that queer trick she had of smiling in a one-sided manner? Had I really forgotten?

I found it hard that morning to compare Bess with the image of years ago; the impressions of the day before had overlayed and obscured a good many of my early recollections of her. As I recognized and remembered some of the odd little mannerisms she had once possessed, the impression that she had not changed became stronger. She had a queer way of asking a question, inflecting it as a statement and punctuating it by a lifted brow; another trick which I recognized and recalled was a fashion she had of snapping her fingers when one was half way through an answer to her question. She had always been singularly quick and alert at grasping things. I detected certain resemblances between Lauretta and Bess; the clear pallor of her face, for instance. I remembered that even in winter Lauretta always had a drift of freckles Scarcely an ornament, I decided. across her nose.

Unconsciously or not, I see that I must have been making this comparison through all the week that I lingered at Whitehaven, sometimes sub-consciously and sometimes deliberately. Either way, I found it a hard one to make, this balancing of a mental image with flesh and blood. Sometimes Elizabeth suffered by the contrast, as was natural, for in my mental image of Lauretta I had incorporated all her good features and omitted the ones which had caused me passing feelings of annoyance. As time went on I found myself recalling these flaws and replacing her image with that of Bess. . . .

Worthington quotes something about turning from a chiseled Venus to yonder girl who fords the burn. . . .

v

Kavenaugh completed his repairs and the next day I persuaded Elizabeth to come on a trial run down the coast to the northward. Kavenaugh had expressed a desire to try out the repaired motor before venturing on an extended trip with it and this furnished me my excuse.

There was a thin, tenuous mist in the air, barely enough to bring out the projections of the coast in relief. We leaned over the rail and watched the coast slide slowly by, past the beach and the mouth of the river and the wooded headlands beyond—partly denuded now and with a sprinkling of summer cottages where I recalled nothing but unbroken shore. We passed the cliff behind which Dick and I had hunted rabbits; Bess laughed as I told her of our exploit.

"I had an old horse pistol and Dick had a Flobert. I was to be the reserve gun—to hold my fire in case they charged."

"You never told me of that."

I hesitated. "And back there—but the dune has shifted. We sat there—you were going to college or on the stage. And Martha was shocked. Or was it Hilda?"

"Hilda," she concluded after a pause. "We looked down on her then because she seemed content with such little things. We looked down on everybody who didn't agree with us. I'm not sure. Perhaps she was nearer right than we were."

"She was a stuffy young prig. So were we, in a different way."

Bess shrugged her shoulders. "She seems satisfied. I see her now and then."

"It's easy to get little things," I said. I had never loved Hilda.

"Little things," she repeated, dwelling on the word. "I suppose you're right."

I had a sense that she disagreed with my interpretation but thought the subject hardly worth discussing.

"But I imagine she's had her disappointments," she went on. "We all have. You have and so have I. Things haven't turned out as we wished them to." She wrinkled her brows. "No, I'll change that. They have turned out as we wished them, but the reality disappoints us. Isn't that it?"

She faced me squarely and put the question direct.

"Partly," I admitted. "But we can only plan and then try to bring reality out of what we plan. If we fail, either in accomplishment or in aim—well, we're in the same boat with the rest of humanity."

"Then your idea of success is—?"

I groped in my mind for an answer.

"Offhand, I should say—" I hesitated. "I haven't considered it. But perhaps aiming at the right thing and then getting it is as good a definition as any."

The Shadow lost headway for a moment as Kavenaugh made some adjustment in the motors; then their steady drone sounded again and we picked up speed. Bess considered my statement, watching the waves as they fell away from the side in little curling ripples.

"Yes, I suppose that covers it," she concluded in a

low voice.

"We make mistakes, of course-"

I had been waiting for that and yet hoping that it would not come.

"We all do," I added. "But sometimes we have a chance to make up for them."

I watched the cliffs slip by and was conscious that my heart had shifted a notch and was beating in my throat.

"We all do," she echoed absently. "But about the making up——— I'm not sure. Do we ever?"

I was silent. I wasn't sure about that myself. Had she deliberately provoked this discussion? I see now that this question was so near the surface that it needed but

a slight shift in the current to bring it up. We had made that shift.

There was but one answer to her question. I was very conscious of her nearness, leaning on the rail beside me; out of the corner of my eye I took in the droop of her shoulders and the clean, smooth lines of her face and throat seen in profile. I couldn't answer and the chance slipped from me.

"Show me about below decks," she commanded

abruptly.

#### VI

I loitered and forgot my haste. There was no hurry; I might not come this way again for years. Best make the most of it while I could. There were further excursions on the *Shadow*, Captain Waldron and once even Grigsby and his progeny accompanying us. There were no further awkward allusions.

I found other excuses for staying. I discovered friends among the summer colony—or rather they discovered me—people I had met during other summers along the coast and on my previous visit at Whitehaven, three years before. I remember once or twice an uneasy feeling that I was slipping back into the old careless way of living that I had left forever. But this was my last fling at it—absolutely. Carpe diem.

Among these people I found Mrs. Fairleigh, still pursuing the eligible male on behalf of her two gawky daughters and with no more success than she had found at the Arrowrock colony. She was the first to discover me, coming out to the *Shadow* and scolding me for not letting her know I was coming. She could have used me, she said frankly. I had been abandoned as a possibility and she could afford to be frank.

"But you're early," she said.

I looked polite questions.

"For the midsummer races, of course," she explained. That seemed a good excuse for my presence and I let it pass. She schemed and planned and assumed a proprietary right over the *Shadow*; there were to be dances ashore, I gathered, and during regatta week—it being assumed that I would stay—a two day trip.

"There will be a moon," she calculated, "and the girls look good by moonlight—provided it's not too bright."

I was a helpless victim. In truth I rather enjoyed being ordered about.

"And who else is coming up from the Arrowrock?" she demanded.

I had no idea.

"The Annersleys?" she suggested.

"They're down in Maine," I answered. "I'm to join them when you let me go."

"Young Larry is quite a friend of yours, isn't he?" she suggested innocently.

"They're good people," I said with an assumed indifference.

"Hmmm, yes; I think I see." She smiled at some thought of hers and changed the subject. . . .

She paused at the gangway as she left, struggling with some demon of curiosity. I expected further questions about the Annersleys.

"You seem quite at home over town," she said, inspecting the handle of her parasol with a sudden interest. "You know some one over there?"

"I'm a native, you know."

"Oh!" she said, as though that explained some deep problem. And then: "Oh!" in a tone of understanding. She had the gift of packing volumes in one syllable.

She looked back as her launch circled away and called up to me over her shoulder. "You must come over this afternoon and bring her."

"I will," I answered, and wondered why she laughed.

Later I was struck with the suspicion that her invitation had been merely a shot at random. I hadn't mentioned Elizabeth. . . .

Still, Mrs. Fairleigh was surprised when I brought Elizabeth over, surprised and not greatly pleased at first, for the girls suffered by the contrast. We sat on the piazza overlooking the rocks that afternoon; there was an ancient dowager whom Mrs. Fairleigh had presented as "Cousin James' wife, you know"—Cousin James, I gathered by inference, had lent Mrs. Fairleigh the place for the summer—and the girls, who presently vanished on some mysterious errand having to do with dressmaking. I remembered that the dowager was inquistive in a mildly genealogical fashion. She was visibly relieved when she found that Bess, through Learoyd, was connected with an old Mr. Bradford.

"I remember him well. One of the very first families to build here," she told Mrs. Fairleigh triumphantly, "one of the very first." By her tone she allied Mr. Bradford with the Pilgrim Fathers.

She was also very annoying in seeking an explanation of Elizebeth's presence in Whitehaven. To her mind the townspeople were an inferior sort of peasantry indeed.

"Settlement work!" she concluded triumphantly, although with an inflection of doubt.

"After a fashion," Bess agreed quietly. Her tone forestalled further inquiry. . . .

That night Mrs. Fairleigh cornered me at the yacht club and planned a dinner on the Shadow—just a few matrimonial possibilities and her daughters, with a sprinkling of people to fill in. Quite a small affair, I was assured.

"And Mrs. Learoyd, of course," she added, quite as an afterthought.

#### VII

"I wish the girls were half as good-looking," said Mrs. Fairleigh viciously. "But they will stick out of their clothes. Look at them!"

She turned to me half despairingly. She was right, but it is always safer to contradict such statements. People expect it.

"I know," she admitted, "it's fashionable to be thin—don't I know it, though, what with half starving myself! But it's not fashionable to be skinny—never will be. They take after their father. Your Mrs. Learoyd now——"

She considered Bess thoughtfully. We sat in the shadows beyond the awning which spread above the deck; across the lighted deck Bess laughed and talked with a man named Isham, one of these people with deep voices and shallow minds. He was correcting her pronunciation of an Italian name. "Not Forenzee," we heard, "but Feorendha." He showed prominent teeth. She tried to follow his pronunciation and gave it up. "Let's call it Florence, then," she answered and smiled up at him. "That's safer and more English." I disliked Isham instinctively.

"That dress of hers is years out of style," Mrs. Fairleigh continued, "although of course you wouldn't notice that. But it suits her. Ethel, now, looks as though some one had wished her clothes on her—some one with a spite against her."

I mumbled something; these comments of hers were embarrassing at times.

"I wish upon my soul that some one would marry them," she went on. "Couldn't you? Just to help me out? Guaranteed quiet and house-broken, domestic—too confoundedly domestic. You won't? Oh well——" She shrugged her plump shoulders and laughed. "I wanted to be frank, for once. Daughters are a bother. And they won't help themselves.

"But Mrs. Learoyd?" she resumed. "You've told me nothing of her, just produced her without explanation or apology. Not that she needs apology, unless for hiding away so long. But explanation—yes. A sweetheart in every port—but that went out with the square-riggers. Or is she an old love? Upon my soul, the more I see of you bachelors the less I know about you."

"She is a widow," I volunteered.

"I knew that already."

"And I knew her a long time ago." I realized how very little I knew of Bess and her life during the past years.

"Go on," prompted Mrs. Fairleigh. "'Once upon a time---'"

Some one slipped a record in the music machine which had been brought up from below and the groups under the awning broke up into couples. Mrs. Fairleigh rose. "Don't mind me," she said in apology, "my mind runs on these things." She contemplated the dancers with a grimacc. "Dance and be thin. No, not with you; you've been away a thousand years and I'm not giving lessons. I'll take Isham away from Mrs. Learoyd. He deserves to do penance."

I watched her as she crossed the lighted space and approached Isham and Bess. They chatted together a moment, then Mrs. Fairleigh seized on Isham, despite his mock protestations, and they circled away together. Through the shifting figures I caught occasional glimpses of Bess, framed against an opening in the awning, a straight figure in dull shimmering yellow against the velvet dusk of the night and the long reflected lines of light from the anchored craft about us. She drew back, half within the outer shadows, and looked on with a smile; I felt her eyes on me as I picked my way across the deck and stood beside her.

"I haven't danced for years," she said, and wrinkled

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her brows in an effort of memory. "And then not like this. 'Spieling,' they used to call it."

"Try it," I urged.

"I shouldn't dare," she remonstrated. "But we might try one of the old ones. No; not in there, out here where they won't see us."

She stepped back into the darkness. I slipped my arm about her and we circled off into the bow, dimly lit by the side lanterns and the riding light high on the mast above As I held her I was very conscious of her physical nearness, of the long smooth lines of her shoulders gleaming in the darkness, the soft curve of her arm against my sleeve, the recurrent pressure of her body against me as I swung her about. We cut across one corner of the sheaf of light from the gap in the raised awning; her eyes swung up to meet mine. For a brief instant I caught a glimpse of her smile; then we entered the darkness again and her face became a dim blur. For an instant I had a feeling that we were back where we had been so long ago. looking forward to life together. Some old codger with a liking for young people had invited us out to a dance on his yacht; next week I would go to Hatherly's and start life. Bess was twenty again and I was twenty-two.

I felt a sudden and fierce renewal of that old passionate hunger which had been with me night and day in those times; the old sense of incompleteness, of living a half life, came over me again. The impression lasted but a moment; for the briefest possible space of time I forgot all that had happened in the intervening years.

"You were talking about me?" she asked, and I came out of my dream.

"Who?" I managed to ask.

"You and Mrs. Fairleigh." She leaned back and glanced up at me. "Talking about my dress? It's out of style, I know."

"No; that's all right." We avoided a deck chair by

a narrow margin. "Very much all right. I never imagined you—well, as having arms and shoulders before."

"I am somewhat outdoors." She released one arm and hitched up the slender gold chain over one shoulder. "But you like it? Don't talk, please." With eyes half closed she hummed a low, throaty accompaniment to the music. We were near the rail when the music ceased and the low murmer of the surf on the rocks beyond the Point again became audible. I dropped my arm slightly and we waited for it to start again.

"Give us something beside church music," came a voice

-Isham's-from behind the awning.

"They're all opera records," we heard the reply; then, "Ah! here's one with some pep in it," followed by the first bars of a record which Kavenaugh had bought in New York—one of these compositions with tom-toms and cymbals in it.

Bess laughed and slipped away from me. "We can't dance to that," she said, and drew out a deck chair. I scated myself beside her and we gazed out over the scattered lights of the harbor.

"Yes," I said suddenly.

She looked at me inquiringly. "Yes, what?"

I had spoken half to myself. "I was trying to remember the last time you and I danced together—at the town hall, wasn't it? And we pulled a settee up to one of the windows in the balcony and looked out over the Square. Do you remember that?"

She was silent for a moment. "Let's drop this 'do you remember' strain," she said suddenly. "It's getting on my nerves. How many times have you said that this week, do you remember?"

She bit her lips in vexation. "There it is again, you see. I'm contracting the habit myself. Let's drop it." "You want to forget, then?" I blurted.

She considered, leaning forward with her chin on her hand. I glanced aside and caught the clear outline of

her profile against the light, the long, clean sweep of her throat; I felt a sudden contraction of my heart.

"Hardly that," she answered finally in a low voice. "There's no River Lethe, you know. If there was——"

Mrs. Fairleigh appeared in the opening of the awning, blinked a moment in the darkness, and then, perceiving us, drew back.

"Come out," called Bess, smiling up at her. "We're wall flowers, making acid tests of the more fortunate. Unless you want to be talked about——"

She pulled out another chair and moved back from the rail.

"God forbid!" said Mrs. Fairleigh fervently, plumping down and fanning herself. "My reputation won't stand it. You're the only sensible persons aboard; it's sheer criminality to dance in such weather. What were you talking about?"

"About a mythical river," I said and turned to Bess. "You were assuming the existence of such a stream. Suppose it did exist?"

I was determined to have an answer, despite Mrs. Fairleigh's interference. But Elizabeth evaded me.

"You could bottle it. There's millions in it," she replied.

Mrs. Fairleigh was mystified. "But where is this river?"

"That's just it; no one knows. I thought once that it ran into the sea; perhaps it does, but I haven't been able to find it."

"Fairy tales!" she scoffed at my explanation. "But you remind me that I'm thirsty. You haven't such a thing as punch—or ice cream on board, have you?"

"There's some cream, I think. But it's very fattening," I suggested maliciously.

"I can stand it," she said resignedly. "I've lost five pounds and can afford to take on a few more. Get me some, please."

I went below and routed out the steward, pausing on the way to curse Mrs. Fairleigh heartily for her untimely intrusion. I returned to find that Isham had joined them, waving a glowing cigar and comparing Whitehaven in derogatory fashion with Mediterranean ports. He preferred the latter, I gathered. "That, for instance," he said, and waved a glowing arc toward the clustered black masses of the wharves on the town side. "They wouldn't allow that sort of thing over there." Isham had no great love for things cis-Atlantic—his own phrase—and took great pains to make his distaste clear. Mrs. Fairleigh ate and hesitated and ate again with a furtive air, pausing now and again to remind Isham of something he had omitted from what was evidently an often rehearsed story. He and Bess became involved in a discussion involving some phase of French railway service—she had been abroad with Learoyd, I already knew from Captain Waldron. And I sat glumly listening, outside of it all.

I had no further chance to speak with Bess alone that evening. I avoided it. I had been on the edge of doing something unpremeditated, and wanted a chance to think it over. It was nearly midnight when the party broke up; we went ashore in the tender and Isham took us around from the Point in his car. We left Bess at her

gate and I returned alone to the Shadow.

I came back to sit and brood in the darkness. That thrill as I held Bess in my arms warned me that I was drifting into something that I should avoid. I had no right to fall in love with Bess again. I had been drifting for a week now, I recognized, and it seemed time to reckon up and take a fresh departure. I had drifted on a strange coast, a pleasant one, but one which was not on the course which I had planned. I had better leave Whitehaven as soon as possible—to-morrow, I decided. I would see Bess in the morning and tell her. Tell her not my reasons, but the simple fact that I was going. I would go on and carry out my plans.

I peopled the semicircle of chairs with their vanished occupants and asked their opinions. I was not quite sure of myself and I wanted their help, even visionary help would be of some use. Isham, with the thin wet lines of hair combed across his lucent forehead, advised me to stay.

"Not so bad here," I caught a faint whisper of his booming drawl. "If you're going anywhere I should advise you to cross the pond. The English ports are

very pleasant at this season."

He misunderstood. It was not a question of places but of two women. His shadow regarded me dubiously and refused to answer.

I turned to the chair which had held Mrs. Fairleigh and found no consolation there. "Oh, stay along," she said. "You're promised for Wednesday and can't go anyway."

She vanished.

The soft padding of bare feet broke the silence, and Karl appeared, clearing way the debris of the party. The sudden glow of my cigar startled him; with a muttered apology he went on with his work. He carried away the wraith of Mrs. Fairleigh, for once mute and unprotesting; Isham was folded up and laid one side. He approached the third chair.

"I'll tend to that one, Karl," I said. "Better go below and turn in. You can do this in the morning."

He passed on forward and vanished. We sat alone, the shadow of Bess and myself; a chill little wind sprang up and broke the long pillars of red and green light into flakes and fragments of flashing color on the harbor floor. The late moon rose over the black masses of the Point as we sat in silent communion; an old moon, stretching forth ineffectual arms to embrace the shining past. Just as I had been.

I rose and stood a moment over the vacant chair beside me.

"You made your decision once; I'm making mine now," I said to myself, and folded up the chair and went below.

#### VШ

I went ashore in the morning to tell Elizabeth that I must leave that day, shrinking from it and yet knowing that it was the only thing to do. I had already sent a note to Mrs. Fairleigh, pleading a sudden telegram as the reason for my unexpected departure. There was no backing out now. I had written a similar note to Elizabeth, written it and frowned over it and at last torn it up and thrown the fragments through the porthole. It seemed unfair to treat her in so cavalier a manner. I adhered to my orignal determination of telling her myself.

I found the house deserted. The gray kitten peered at me from the shelter of a chair and then came forward to rub against my legs; she arched her back to be scratched and followed me out through the kitchen. Through the rear window I saw a glint of moving color under the low arches of the apple trees. We went out together, the kitten running ahead of me down the trodden path, looking back at me and making private excursions into the grass on either side in pursuit of grasshoppers and other big game.

Bess was feeding the chickens which she had housed in our old "Piruts' Lare"—a late hatch, for the kitten and sundry of his acquaintances had made a Roman holiday of the first brood. The little fluffy yellow balls ran about her feet as she showered grain on them from an earthen bowl; the kitten spied them as we noiselessly drew near and lost interest in grasshoppers. He crouched low with twitching hindquarters, then sprang at one which had wandered from the main flock. The chicken shrieked in fright and fled with outstretched wings; the kitten, equally surprised and frightened, fled in the opposite

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## FLOOD TIDE

direction, scrambled up a tree and glared down with yellow eyes.

"James!" said Bess reprovingly. "Didn't I lock you

in the house?" She turned, saw me and smiled.

"You put him up to that," she accused.

"Indeed I didn't," I protested. "That was solely his own idea."

James descended and was forgiven and hid behind the folds of Elizabeth's dress, eyeing the chickens with an air of high indifference.

"You enjoyed last night?" I asked as she resumed her

scattering of grain.

"Immensely," she said, and stifled a yawn. She laughed. "I'm sleepy; don't misinterpret. I really did enjoy it."

"I hoped you would."

"I haven't been to anything of that sort for—it must be nearly five years," she said reminiscently. "Do you realize how much you've shaken me out of my regular way of living?"

"Do you regret it?"

"No," she considered, and was silent for a moment, dribbling out the yellow grain between her fingers. "But you'll be going away soon and I'll get back into it."

"I——" This was my chance to tell her that I was going to-day. It had seemed marvelously easy last night; now, in her presence, it seemed a most difficult thing to say. "No matter," I said in answer to her questioning look.

"Watch!" she said suddenly and stooped over the chickens with a sudden graceful gesture. "Krrrrrr!" she trilled. There was a scurrying and scattering, a twinkle of yellow legs and not a chicken was to be seen, save one little fellow who ran about in circles, setting up a most piteous clamor. Bess held out her hands and he ran into them, snuggling down and cheeping contentedly.

She lifted him for my inspection. "This is Horatius—

'whence all but he had fled,' you know. Poor dear, he's lost one eye." Horatius cocked his remaining eye at me belligerently, pecked at her fingernail, and looked forth on the world in vast satisfaction.

"Silly things," she commented. "They think the sky is falling." I watched her as she leaned over and coaxed them out with reassuring noises. The morning sun sent down little lance shafts of gold between the leaves of the trees; her figure, as she leaned over, was dappled with alternate light and shadow. Many of my remembrances of her are indistinct half-visualizations, but this memory stands out with noonday clearness. I recall every line and sweep of her dress, swirling and blending into the grass as she knelt on one knee, tempting the scattered legions from their retirement. One ray of sunshine struck her hair and sunk a shaft of pure gold through the coils. Over her shoulder I saw Horatius peer out from between her curled forefinger and thumb and peck valiantly to show the more timorous that there was nothing to fear. . . .

I find this the most difficult part of my story to write. Difficult because I cannot explain it. I can explain neither my previous blindness nor the great flare which lit up my inner being as I stood looking down on Elizabeth. I became aware of a vast and intolerable ache within me: a sudden longing which transcended any sensation I had ever known. It was an engulfing and overwhelming desire, of torturing poignancy; Bess was the one woman who had ever mattered or ever would matter in my life. I had known this and sought to conceal it even from myself: I had no doubts now. All the barriers which I had erected were swept away; my resolution of the night before vanished. It became the squeaking and gobbering of a bloodless creature who had deliberately shut his eyes to the truth; it became the maundering of a poor emasculated being whose actions were directed by unreason. But when I spoke the man of the night before was still in control—for a bare moment; he spoke, and was then swirled away never to reappear.

"Yes," I said. Had she glanced up I must have cried out in agony. With an effort I went on. "I'm going away soon—to-day." I paused again and wrenched control from this blindworm creature who had ruled me so long. The effort brought tears to my eyes. "Will you come with me?"

The only sign that Elizabeth had heard was an involuntary contraction of her hand; the flow of grain ceased. She remained immobile for a long moment, then turned her head slowly and looked up at me.

"Marry me, I mean," I went on dully. "I want you." There seemed nothing more to say.

Still she failed to answer.

"Can't we start over again, Bess—patch things up and go on from where we left off?"

She rose slowly and regarded me with level eyes. There was no doubt, no confusion in her gaze, only an intense and searching scrutiny.

"I need you—I have needed you all these years," I went on desperately, regaining my voice. "I was a fool once, let me make up for it now."

She shook her head. "You can't."

"I know; these things are past all remedy. Can't we forget them and start afresh?"

"If we only could!" I barely caught the words.

"Why not? Are we to be bound all our lives by the blindness of those two so long ago? They are dead, our old selves, and better forgotten."

"Not dead; we can forget the dead." She turned from me and spoke over her shoulder.

"I've been blind for so, long, Bess, and I see it now. "I have always wanted you—always loved you and always shall." I was still dazed by the suddenness of my outburst and could only reiterate my intense longing. "Bess!" I cried.

She shook her averted head. "No; I can't."

"You can't?" That was my answer, then. "Why?" "Don't you see that it would be just a patching up?" she said slowly, still turned away from me. "The same old difficulties with new ones added? We've changed a good deal—more than either of us realize, perhaps."

"You haven't changed."

"I have; and so have you."

I made impatient and no doubt absurd gestures. This was a side issue. But: "For better or worse?" I asked.

She looked at me searchingly. "I scarcely know," she said. As she turned I saw that her eyes were misty with tears. "For the better in some things, perhaps, and in others—not changed at all."

"Not changed in one thing. I still love you," I persisted.

She thought for a moment with downcast eyes. "Yes, I think you do—I know you do. But is that everything? Isn't it possible to love a person and still see the utter impossibility of marriage? I know that neither of us would be any happier for it. We never agreed on anything; we never shall. . . . I'm afraid—just that, afraid. Selfish, too, perhaps."

"You were not afraid once."

"No. But I'm wiser now. I know enough to be afraid. I know how hard, how impossible it would be for you and me to get along together. We couldn't—we're selfish, both of us, unwilling to concede. For a while, perhaps—but in the end it would mean unhappiness for us both. I've had enough unhappiness in my life." She spoke in dry, hard phrases, paused for a moment and then went on passionately. "Don't you see? We couldn't agree before—could we agree now that we have grown still further apart? Why won't you see it?"

I tried, and failed. "You expect too much," I said. "No two are in perfect agreement on everything."

"I know. If it was a matter of mere trivial differences

—but it goes deeper than that. We had different ideals of life twelve years ago; have we drawn any closer since then? Or further apart? It isn't a surface difference, it's fundamental. We can't help it."

"Then this is your ideal of life, living here in this fashion?" Some of the contempt which I had always

felt for Whitehaven crept into my voice.

"Not exactly," she said, "but it's nearer to it than what you offer. I'm contented here, not happy, perhaps, but fairly contented. I know, 'content with little things' as you said. Not so easy as you imagined, however. Before you came—but that's selfish. . . . I wish you hadn't brought this up; I tried to avoid it. It would have been hard to get back, after you had gone; now it will be harder still."

She made a gesture of finality. "You said that you

were going to-day?" she said evenly.

"You're not going back to this poverty stricken life," I said, almost angrily. "I won't let you." I swung her around, then drew her close to me, my arms about her. She neither resisted nor responded; I held her close for a moment, her head drooped back with a bar of sunlight across her dear face; her eyes were half veiled and a faint shadow of a smile lingered about the corners of her mouth. Only for a moment; then the monstrous futility of my desire came to me with sudden force and I dropped my arms. She made no motion to free herself, but stood as I left her. Her eyes opened slowly, not chilling blue as they had been a moment before, but filled with a soft and impersonal regret.

"No," she said quietly. "You can't change me that way. Twelve years ago you might have, but not now."

She took another handful of grain and sent small golden showers over the backs of the chickens. "Shall we drop this?" she asked. "It's no use, you see."

"I have been mistaken all week," I said wearily. "I

thought that you still loved me."

"You are mistaken in many things," she said in a low "But not that. I do love you, as much as I ever But it's different. Is it ever possible to love a person with open eyes? To love him completely—beyond the shadow of a doubt? . . . It's a curious sort of love— I love you and want to be near you-all these years I haven't forgotten you—and yet I won't marry you? Why? Because I have no illusions about marriage, I suppose. No illusions about anything. You have, and I envy you. Marriage isn't a solution. It seemed so Her voice dropped away into silence and when she spoke again it was with a different intonation. "It was a solution then. Why couldn't we have seen at first that we were growing apart with every day? We might have worked matters out, even fought them out, and come to some sort of a solution. But now-too late."

"I have everything that you wanted then," I offered.

I found a faint hope springing up within me.

"I know—but you don't consider that I may not want them now. You think that I haven't changed, that I'm still a silly girl in the twenties. It's flattering, in a way but not so very flattering after all. I don't want to live as you do, I won't, I'm not fitted for it."

"We could live here." I clutched at this solution.

"Don't be absurd," she said with a slight touch of sarcasm. "You love the town, I know. Neither of us would be happy; I'm contented here alone, but I couldn't be contented with you. No. We've settled into lines and we can't get out of them."

A sudden and senseless jealousy took possession of me. "There is someone else—here?"

"Give me credit for speaking the truth, at least," she said bitterly.

My persistency, my blindness, my awkwardness must have hurt her immensely. But I kept on: "Is it Learoyd, then?"

"Still bound by his memory, you mean?" She in-

spected me gravely. "Yes, partly that. . . . Not as you mean, though. I haven't told you anything of our life together—you don't need to be told. It wasn't a very happy time. Perhaps that's why I'm afraid."

Her lips quivered and for the first time I realized that I was hurting her. I tried to frame some sort of apology

and found my mind a hopeless turmoil.

"Have you ever considered yourself coldly—just stood off and looked yourself over?" she demanded suddenly.

"Yes. A good many times, Bess." I thought of the moonlight and the shadows before Casa Number Three.

"And acted on it?"

I nodded.

"And found yourself right?" she went on steadily.

"No. Anything but right."

She was silent for a space. "I've found it just the same way," she said finally. "Just the same. After Phil—died. You don't know anything about that."

"I don't want to," I answered. "That doesn't matter."

She ignored my statement. "That was the first time that I'd ever been free to do as I chose," she went on. "I wanted to do something, to make something out of my life. You don't know how I wanted to do something worth while. Oh, I tried; I had a little money left, and I tried it for nearly two years. I wanted to do something-anything, just so I could respect myself. And I lost what little self-respect I'd ever had." She stopped and laughed. "I couldn't even hold a place long enough to get started. My training, I suppose—if I ever had any training. Or inheritance. I don't know which. My father, a visionary ne'er-do-well; my mother, a vacillating nonentity; myself-what you might expect. I had the desire, as my father had, but I couldn't quite do things. I always seemed to fall just short of that. Little Polish and Jew girls learned faster than I did, and did better work. I was just too old to learn and not old enough for an old ladies' home. I tried everything. For a time

I was cashier in one of your stores; you didn't know that. A failure, of course; I messed things horribly. . . . You see why I came back here? And why I'm contented to stay here?"

"I don't see," I said stubbornly.

"I'm a failure, a failure in everything," she said. "I'd be a failure as your wife."

"I don't see," I reiterated helplessly.

She lost patience. "That's just it, you don't see and you never would see my reasons. Life together would be just one compromise after another. You're too selfish to see why I can't do as you wish.

"Forgive me," she went on quickly. "We're both selfish; perhaps I'm more so than you. I suppose I've been encouraging you all this week, out of pure selfishness. I should have known that it would come to this. I saw it last night when Mrs. Fairleigh interrupted you. And when I saw you this morning—I knew."

"I came this morning to tell you that I was going—just that. The rest I couldn't help. I wanted to avoid that, too."

"You too? Why? You saw that it was impossible but——?" Her eyes darkened and she frowned. "You asked me out of pity, then?"

"Not that, Bess. I didn't realize. I thought that I could go away and forget. But I can't—I can't." I refused to consider that.

"You must," she said.

"Mrs. Fairleigh told you?" I said dully.

"About what?"

I remembered then that Mrs. Fairleigh had merely voiced a suspicion of my interest in Lauretta. I stumbled on blindly.

"About Lauretta Annersley?"

"No."

"We were engaged."

She contemplated me for a moment in doubt. "You had a right. You've not been tied to me."

"We are engaged," I said desperately.

I wanted to explain how I had wished to avoid this; how I had debated with myself the night before. I wanted to explain the whole affair—and remained silent while she looked at me.

"Oh!" she said in a surprised little voice. She bit her lips and groped for words. "I thought that I knew you—but this is worse. I seemed more desirable, I suppose. You should have told me before."

"I suppose so."

"You should have." She dropped her eyes and went on in a low voice. "If I had yielded—without knowing this—did you consider that?"

I was conscious of an immense weariness. "I think that I considered it after a fashion last night," I answered. "This morning I considered nothing save that I love you. Nothing else matters."

She stood silent for a long time, building little heaps of grain in the yellow bowl, flattening them out and then building them up anew. Once or twice she started to speak; she looked up at me, then her lips quivered and she looked down again.

"I think you had better go," she said finally. "You have behaved abominably all week. So have I. But I didn't know—— You'd better go before I say things that I will regret."

She was on the verge of tears, like a hurt child. I had hurt her immensely by my colossal selfishness; had I tried deliberately I could have hurt her no more.

"Go away," she said brokenly, and turned away to hide her face from me. "I can't stand it. Go away."

I made a clumsy effort at speech and then stopped, inarticulate. Everything I said seemed to make matters worse. Without farewell I went up the path.

I looked back as I turned blindly into the street. I

don't know—I suppose that I turned with the vague hope that she would stretch her arms out after me in longing and regret. Hope is a thing of marvelous resiliency.

I saw her for an instant down between the gray aisles of tree trunks, but her back was turned. Just a glimpse I had of her tall, straight figure; I caught the glint of showered grain and the moving about of yellow dots in the shadow at her feet. Then the barberry hedge intervened and I set my face toward the Shadow.

## CHAPTER THE FOURTH

1

"Well, that's ended," I thought savagely, just as I had twelve years before. And, just as then, it was not ended. . . .

I was dazed, blinded, just as I had been long ago; this sudden tidal wave of emotion had left me stranded helplessly. I remained in a blank daze until the Shadow passed beyond the Point and met the heave of the ground swell. Consciousness returned; all that afternoon I paced up and down the narrow cabin like a silly caged beast, arguing, remonstrating, pausing to make senseless gestures and then going on. I recalled things which I might have said, arguments which I might have made. As though arguments would have mattered! My argument came in sterile and shabby little rushes; silences were succeeded by tag ends and fragments of remonstrance, pleading, brow-beating statements. I recalled every objection of hers and anwered them again. Not that it mattered now, I knew, but I tried to justify myself, to convince myself that I was right and she was wrong.

"Fool! To tell her of Lauretta!" I remember shouting. "There was no need of that." I had a fleeting perception of how low I had fallen, paused, and then switched

violently to some other point.

I went around the great rock of her refusal, trying to pry it from my road with phantom toothpicks. "You know this; you must know this! Good God, why won't you see it?" I fought to keep from seeing myself as Elizabeth must have seen me—selfish, stubborn, filled with an intolerant self pride. All my banderlogic—and I must have gone on for hours—was only an attempt to

convince myself. I failed. However I expounded, repeated, contradicted myself in a weird saraband of tenuous argument, the fact of her refusal remained, indisputable, staring.

I did foolish things, as the great mirror in the cabin

testified before I smashed it.

"You grinning ape!" I said, staring at my reflection, and drove at it with a bronze paper weight. If stared into blackness and the crash and tinkle of falling glass awoke me. I surveyed the ruins stupidly for a moment, fumbled around among the fragments of glass and cut my hand. A faint realization of my madness came to me. I locked the door on the wreckage and went on deck.

The Shadow was headed inshore, under a gray and lowering sky. Steel gray seas shouldered by overside, flawed and blurred by transitory gusts of cold rain. The shore loomed blue in the distance, gleamed in sunshine for a moment under a slow moving break in the clouds, and then faded and receded as the rain closed in.

"Id will blow," said Bergson over his shoulder. "There were storm signals at Whidehaven as we left. Better we should run in."

My mind caught and held his last words. Run in? I had always run in; always avoided strife, a fair weather sailor all my life. Run in? To do what? To mope about, to think. God!

"How much gas have you, Kav?" I called down the tube.

"Full tanks," came the answer.

"I'll take the wheel," I said to Bergson. He abandoned it reluctantly. Under my guidance the Shadow swerved, took a wave over the side, staggered and came about, headed out into the open sea. Bergson looked at me, shook his head, and went below. . . .

There my memory blurs and runs together into a gray puddle. I remember the clouds ahead, lit for a time by a pale reflection of the sunset behind us; I remember the clouds thickening and coming lower and the rain increasing in heavier guests which blotted out the horizon. Night came on and I held the Shadow on a drunken and wabbly course out into the storm.

It was foolish rather than dramatic. I suppose I should say that I fought against the power of the sea, shouted defiances, worked myself up into a berserker mood. In reality it was nothing of the sort. I had something of that idea when I headed out, but with the closing in of night I lost it.

If I had any purpose at all in running out to sea, it was to keep myself from thinking. I was successful in that. There was no chance to think; the necessity of keeping the Shadow head on to the seas kept me mentally taut, shut out every other thought. The seas came in ceaseless procession, looming out of the darkness ahead. charging down and shouldering beneath the Shadow and vanishing with an arm wrenching kick at the rudder. Then another sea. And another. Between every two I straightened the Shadow as well as I could, saw her glistening bow rear, drip, and plunge again, peered through the streaming windows of the wheel house and braced myself for the next twist and heave. It was a night of phantasms, of trying to stand still in a world which rushed by in racing waves and slanting rain and shrieking wind. And at intervals I was sick-sea-sick for the first time in my life. Through all my physical misery I was conscious of a wan sense of satisfaction: this was misery, but at least it was preferable to mental torture.

Certain things stand out. Once I let my mind wander back through the endless hours to Whitehaven. I roused to find a great wall of gray and black hanging over me. I closed my eyes as it crashed down; the Shadow staggered, and the tender, lashed on deck, broke loose and went bump—bump toward the stern and vanished overboard. And toward dawn we passed a fishing

schooner, running before the wind with only a handkerchief of a sail showing. She passed close to port; I had a fleeting glimpse of a dripping bowsprit, of lashed and nested dories, of decks veiled in a gray smother of spume. Two indistinct figures in yellow oilskins wrenched at her wheel high in the lifted stern; she crashed on and the endless procession of seas resumed their shadowy march.

Soon after this—so it seems in my memory, although it might have been a matter of hours—the wind flattened and the rain thinned. The seas, no longer whipped on, came more regularly. I was tired, inexpressibly tired and weary. Bergson appeared, took the wheel from me despite my feeble objections, and I went below to sleep

the sleep of the dead. . . .

When I woke a pale and watery sunshine had succeeded the gale. We had reached one of the Nova Scotia coast towns—there was a malevolently smelly dock close aboard and a fringe of inquisitive faces along the edge of it. We stayed there two days and then started again for the Annersleys.

But this served its purpose. It put an interval between Elizabeth and Whitehaven and the present. When I began to think again I was able to think sanely, or semisanely, at least.

п

I must have disappointed the Annersleys. I was two weeks overdue and failed to make any satisfactory explanations of my tardiness. I think that I made some vague references to motor trouble, an excuse which they accepted the more readily when I sent the Shadow over to Bath for necessary repairs. I must have disappointed them also in my account of Cadberry's expedition; all that seemed ages ago and it cost me a struggle to recall many of the incidents.

I found them in a converted farmhouse looking out over

the bay and the clustered rocky islands. I have an impression of one great room on the ground floor, low-ceiled and with a yawning fireplace of field stone at either end. Across the front was a broad porch facing an orchard of gnarled and wind-bent apple trees, a cove with the Warp alongside a little pier and neutral territories of salt marsh between the sea and land; beyond this were the wind-whipped expanses of the bay and the low clusters of pine topped islands. At another time I should have found the place highly delightful. I find that I recall but little of it save what I set down here.

I moped about, sitting for long hours frowning and thinking, passively resisting all efforts to draw me out. I took my easel out to lonely places, spent long hours alone, and came back with still virgin canvases. The Annersleys were very kind to me, much kinder than I deserved. After the first day or so, they let me go my own way, valiantly making pretence that the business of life went on as usual. But I remember that once or twice I found Lauretta's gray eyes fixed on me with an expression of doubt and inquiry, an expression that vanished as I looked up. . . .

I was torn loose from everything that had been my life to this time—torn loose mentally, which is a different thing from my physical isolation at Casa Number Three. All the structure of my life had fallen in dust and ashes about my ears; it was hard to reconstruct and find the cause of the downfall. It was not even reconstruction as yet. I poked around among the fragments, still blinded by the dust of the fall, trying to dig down and find some solid foundation below this shattered ruin.

It was, in its entirety, a period of alternation. I swung pendulum-wise from one emotion to another, from conclusion to conclusion, seizing passionately upon one conclusion and then abandoning it for a contradictory one.

My first feeling was one of intense bewilderment, of

puzzled groping about. I tried to attack the question as in former times I had attacked some problem relating to The Stores; I tried to set down the facts, to weigh and analyze. And I found that there were no facts. Love is not to be reduced to figures and percentages. I still saw no reason for Elizabeth's refusal to marry me. I went at it from the wrong angle; instead of asking, "Why should she?" I asked, "Why shouldn't she?"

In all ways I repeated the process of twelve years before. I had grown no wiser in the ways of life—or in the

ways of love, which is the same thing.

I arrived at no solution. I doubted everything. I had lost all confidence in myself, in my own judgment, in everything. I have never been a strong man, brutally instantaneous of decison. I can decide on facts, but without facts I oscillate helplessly. There was no solid basis of truth here. Did I love Elizabeth? Did I love Lauretta? In God's name, did I love anything but myself? I tortured myself with futile and needless questions which I couldn't answer and which I knew I couldn't answer. And even had I answered them I should have been no nearer peace of mind. In all this there was not the slightest question of marriage and possession. I put that aside. That was another question and one which had solved itself.

For through all this confused welter of thoughts there drove one which became gradually clearer. Marriage with Lauretta now became a manifest impossibility. Perhaps I give myself undue credit, but I believe that I should have seen this even had it been possible to write the previous chapter differently. We had each built up rose tinted images of the other during our separation; disillusionment was inevitable upon our coming together again. It was unavoidable; even had we closed our eyes to the truth we must have seen clearly at some time.

All my finely conceived images of Lauretta fell away and vanished. Not that she wasn't as fine and sweet as I

had imagined her; she was all that, but in a different way. I had pictured myself as her equal, as a comrade; I had imagined things which we might share together. There could be no sharing, I recognized clearly. We were in harmony on many things, the difficulties which had shut me off from Bess were not apparent here. But Lauretta had one thing which I had lost. This was youth. There were eighteen years between us, and eighteen years is an obstacle which even semi-sober thought cannot ignore. I had seen other couples try to ignore a difference of this sort, and the results had not been pleasing.

Besides, you know, I had surprised that look in Lauretta's eyes. I knew that I was found out, unmasked.

ш

I sat in the living room, a magazine on my knees, making a pretence at reading and really staring out of the windows and thinking. The three windows before me framed a triptych of shimmering sea-scape and white floating clouds; above the sill the topsail of the sloop drew closely along and vanished from sight. Peter and Larry had gone fishing across the bay, after asking me to accompany them and taking my refusal in good part. Lauretta entered behind me, paused, and then came over and sat on the window seat before me. She let slip the leather strap over her shoulder and deposited her golf clubs with a clatter, then extracted a club and poked at my magazine.

"Don't be grumpy," she said, as it fell to the floor with a flutter of leaves. "Come out and play a round with me. You haven't been out to the links yet, have you?"

"Not yet, Laury," I answered.

"You haven't been anywhere," she said in sudden vexation. She leaned over and swung the club in her tanned little hands, making shots at the pattern of the rug. "What's the trouble? Business?" I shook my head.

"You're not sick, are you?" she suggested. "You said that Cadberry had fever, you know."

"I'm healthy enough," I responded gloomily.

"Then what?" She wrinkled her brows and sent the magazines sliding across the floor with a well directed blow. "You've moped around ever since you came here, just sitting around and frowning. You've avoided everybody. You run away when you see me coming. You're worried over something, I know."

"I am worried," I admitted.

"I know," she said slowly. "It concerns me?"

I looked at her blankly. She had gone directly to the heart of matters.

"You needn't tell me," she went on. "I know. I'm thinking of it, too."

"It's hard work, isn't it?"

"Indeed it is," she agreed. "We haven't changed—and still we have."

"We see more clearly, that's all. Isn't that it?"

"I suppose so," she responded. "I hope so."

"It's a miserable business, Laury," I went on. I had dreaded this discussion, but now that it was started I found a relief in discussing it. "I haven't changed in my feelings toward you—and yet——"

"Nor I either," she agreed and smiled faintly. "And

yet-----'

"There are other questions mixed with it," I suggested.
"There are," she said, and we sat for a moment gloomily considering these other questions. We were fencing, each waiting for the other to make the next move.

Finally she laughed and the deadlock was broken.

"There's no use in giving up everything just for that," she said suddenly, rising and standing before me. "We have the rest of the summer to mope and be miserable in. And just now playing golf is more important. Come."

"Old Doc Annersley's Cure," she said smiling, as I rose

and accompanied her. "Kills the blues and induces cosmic harmony. Here, take Larry's bag, mine too. It's the best medicine in the world; get out and hit something."

"I think-" I began.

"Don't think," she interrupted. "I don't want you to think. You've been thinking too much. You know, after a while you get all muddled up, like a man lost in the woods. You just travel around in a circle and go over and over the same ground. And you don't get anywhere."

"I really think-" I persisted.

"But I asked you not to think," she interrupted again.

"I think that you're right," I completed.

"I knew that already," she sniffed scornfully. "Why make such a parade of the obvious truth?"

She bedeviled me most unmercifully all afternoon, a small flushed demon in a short skirt and tam o' shanter, always at my elbow, criticizing, commenting, suggesting, wondering that she had known me so long without discovering that I had ten thumbs and two left hands.

## IV

August the First came. I remembered with a twinge of regret that I had promised to return to work on that date. The old order was to have passed with July; after that my life would be on another plane. It was. I touch the common lot of humanity on that point.

The incident at Sarajevo had occurred while we were coming north from Yucatan. We had missed that entirely; when we reached New York other events had swept it from the front page. The smouldering, the first wisps of smoke and the crackle and dart of flames had passed as unnoticed as this first spark; the first maneuvering and futile exchange of telegrams had taken place during the week at Whitehaven. I had missed all that. Only after I reached the Annersleys did war seem more than a

bare possibility; even at the last moment it was thought that the storm would pass over. Clouds were forever gathering and dispersing. This too would pass. War—we had outgrown that. We thought of the growth of Socialism, arbitration treaties, the Hague, and were comforted. "The bankers won't let them fight," said Peter, and I believed him. War, save as police duty, was a thing of the past.

It seems strange to recall these pre-bellum arguments and opinions. We denied the possibility of a horrible thing in the same spirit which moves men to deny the existence of crime and poverty. We like to contemplate pleasant things, and one of the easiest ways of securing the pleasant is by denying the existence of the unpleasant. I know, because I have followed that way all my life. Humanity in general is no better. I find some slight consolation in that thought.

Then August the First came, the first of a long line of red kings, and the impossibility became an actuality. Yet it was all marvelously distant and unreal; I remember the first days of the war only as a shadowy background of my own troubles. The world was all wrong and I was

part of it.

Prophets shifted their ground and began to proclaim that at the worst the war could last but three months—six months—a year; only the most visionary went beyond that limit. Annersley became a short-war man, after recovering from the surprising fact that the nations had flown in the face of his prophecies of no war at all. "Three months, then exhaustion. The masses will rise," he said wisely. And he has stuck to that opinion ever since; the end of the war is always three months ahead.

There was much talk of the Kronprinzessin Cecilie. There was more talk of naval activities off the coast. All lights were mysterious lights. There were rumors of a sea fight off the islands; Larry heard the firing and tore off in the Warp. He returned with the news that some

one had been blasting for a foundation on one of the outer islands. He was very down in the mouth. Two of his intimate pals were abroad and he had missed accompanying them only by the narrowest of margins. He seemed fated to miss everything.

Larry went over after the mail each afternoon, making the trip in the Warp and coming back laden with all the available papers. He devoured every line of war news and then spent the rest of the day in bewailing the hard fate which had condemned him to a life of inaction.

He was especially bitter upon his return with the mail that evening; the papers were full of wildly inaccurate accounts and as a crowning sorrow he had received a letter from one of his pals, then in Paris. It was over a week old, full of hasty surmises and details of the preliminary movements. He lifted up his voice and wept.

"'Will have a lot to tell you in September,' " he read, and looked around in disgust. "And a fine lot I'll have to tell them."

"Count yourself lucky," grunted Peter without looking up from his paper. "They're not seeing so much of it as you think. And most likely you'd get your fool head shot off."

Larry muttered some unfilial sentiment. "They're going to get a bunch together and form a Foreign Legion," he announced as he read on. "I'd like to see Chuck and old Fox Trott going around in baggy red pants."

He subsided to silence and we read on in the waning light. Namur, Liege, Brussels—the names stand out yet. I soon tired of it and watched the silent gray army of the invading mist conquer the salt swale below, carry the outworks of the orchard and then creep and flow along the ragged aisles toward us. I watched that for a while and then watched Lauretta. She, too, had discarded her papers and frowned out over the silent mist. Thinking, perhaps. I thought too.

Peter discarded his sheets with an annunciatory rustle. He cleared his throat. "Three months I'll give them," he reiterated, and we foresaw another exposition of his reasons for such a period.

"By the way," said Larry from the steps below and fumbled in his pocket. "I'd forgotten. There's a tele-

gram for you."

He tossed it over to me and went on with his reading. From Marks, I thought as I ripped open the envelope. Probably some reminder that the date set for my return had passed. He could wait.

But I had guessed wrong. It was from Stowell, terse and abrupt and cryptic. "Come back. Situation bad growing worse. We need you." Just that much and never an explanation of what situation was meant nor exactly who needed me. Stowell always made the irritating assumption that I knew more than I did. What situation? Something connected with his affairs, probably. The only fact that the telegram conveyed was that Stowell was in some sort of trouble and needed me.

I handed the telegram to Peter; he stopped midway in a fine passage concerning modern fortifications, and read.

"But what is it?" he said blankly, and turned the telegram over in search of concealed information.

"I've no idea," I said, "beyond that I must go as soon

as possible."

"Not to-night," he objected. "There are no trains. You might get one from Bath, but—how about it, Laury?"

"A hurry call, is it?" she asked. "Very much of a hurry?"

She appealed to me. I knew what thought was uppermost in her mind; to leave now would leave an unsettled question behind me. But there was no help for it.

"No," she decided abruptly. "There are no trains."

"The Shadow," suggested Larry.

But the Shadow was out of commission at Bath.

"I know," said Laury suddenly. "The Boston boat. We can catch her at Popham—she's always late, you know."

Her eyes met mine for a moment. "I'll go over with you," she answered my unspoken question.

## V

We swung out into the dusk, circled away and headed south. "... luck," Annersley called from the string piece of the dock, his voice penetrating the roar of the motor. "... back ... straightened out."

I waved my hand in answer and he faded to a dim blur of white as the Warp drove on. Larry shouted back over his shoulder and Lauretta made some adjustment in the motors; the roar flattened to a steady penetrating drone; we gathered speed and two wings of spray spattered and wavered out over the wrinkled sea. Behind us the shore dwindled to a dim line; beyond the fringe of outer islands a great star winked and flared and kept pace with us as we swished along. Lauretta made a final adjustment and switched on a tiny glow lamp, then came swaying aft and sat beside me, wiping her hands on a bit of waste.

"Is it anything serious, do you suppose?" she asked.
"The telegram? I don't know. Stowell is in some sort of trouble. I may be able to help him. And perhaps not. I've been away so long, you know. It may be anything."

Silence fell between us; the drone of the motor and the hiss and curl of the following wake shut out all else.

"But you'll come back again," she asserted presently.

"I'll try to," I promised. I had no idea what lay before
me. I didn't care. I might return, or I might find it impossible to get away for the rest of the summer. My
month was up. The war—new complications—the
chances were that I shouldn't return. But to go away
and leave our question unsettled, a sword hanging over
our heads—— No. That, at least, could be settled.

"Have you decided?" I asked. I knew that the subject was uppermost in her mind, as it was in mine.

She shook her head slowly. "Not yet," she answered in a low voice, drawing the bunch of waste slowly through her fingers. "Sometimes I think one way; sometimes another. It's awfully hard to decide such things, isn't it?"

I knew how hard it was. "But there's only one conclusion, Laury. We might as well make it now. . . . I may come back—I'll try to—but I may not. It's no good leaving things unsettled. We know as much now as we ever will. . . . We can't go on."

I caught her answer, barely audible above the thrum of

machinery. "I think that too," she said.

"We can't go on," I repeated, and stopped miserably. "I'm looking ahead, seeing the future in a new light. . . . I'm nearly forty, you know. If we could stay as we were last year—but that's impossible. We've changed. I'm ten years older now. We've been good friends, we always will be, I hope. Marriage isn't just being good friends; it's more than that. I know that I would be happy. It would mean the solution of many things that trouble me. But you wouldn't—be happy, I mean. You might for a while—but I'm getting old. I feel it. I'm looking back, not looking ahead. If I considered myself alone this is the last thing I'd say. But I'm trying to look at it from your side. I know myself better than you do. I'm not much good."

She made a gesture of negation. I stopped. Had I gone on I must have told her of Elizabeth. That was something apart. I wanted her to remember only the better side of me.

"You see, don't you?" I appealed.

"Just as you do. You make it very easy for me."

"Don't," I said clumsily. "I think I'm trying to make it easy for myself."

"I dragged you into it," she said penitently.

"No-and if you did I'm glad. I shall always remem-

ber it as something wonderfully good and clean. Not an

unpleasant thing connected with it."

"No, there isn't." She turned with a despairing little gesture, a faint smile about her eyes. "Why aren't you ten years younger?"

"Why aren't you ten years older?"

She found courage to laugh. "I don't want to be. But if you only were—"

"It's too late to change that now. That's the trouble, isn't it? I've been masquerading as something I'm not. And now I'm found out."

She nodded soberly. The stars peered out as we ripped along through the gathering dusk; the wind came in gusts against our faces, mingled with the spray of our passage; a strand of her dusky hair whipped loose and caressed my cheek with soft fingers. She looked up, and I caught the flash of her smile in the glow of the lamp.

"There'll be no letters to burn; that's one thing we avoid," she said. "And we've been engaged nearly a year! By rights, you know, I ought to have a bundle of letters tied in a faded pink ribbon, to read and be miserable over on rainy days. You've cheated me."

She spoke lightly, and yet there was a catch in her voice.

"There will be no awkward reminders," I agreed.

"No one ever knew about it but you and me." She seemed to take some consolation in that thought.

"Mrs. Fairleigh suspected," I said.

"She's always thinking something of that sort," responded Lauretta absently. "When did you see her?"

"Last week. She's at Whitehaven this year. I stopped there on the way up."

"I didn't know," she said, and I caught her frown as she wrinkled her brows over some inner problem.

There was so much that she didn't know. I had hurt her; she was still in doubt. She still thought that I was a decent man, hurting myself for her good. I was trying to save myself something unpleasant and I knew it. Why couldn't I tell her why I had stopped at Whitehaven? Why didn't I? I was trying to persuade myself that I did a high and noble thing because it was right—not because it was easiest. "Masquerading," I had said. Still masquerading. Trying to keep her respect when I couldn't respect myself. Tell her.

I would.

"You know--" I started, and got no further.

"I haven't treated you right," she said suddenly. "You've been so—so white; and I've lied to you. I'm a mean little sneak."

She gulped and then went on desperately.

"You would be surprised—hurt if I became engaged to Ross DeWitt—the architect, you know?"

"Why no, Laury," I answered, "but---"

"I saw a great deal of him during the winter," she went on hurriedly. "I'd have written to you about him—but I couldn't. He asked me in June. He didn't know, you see? And I couldn't tell him."

"You poor kid! And you turned him down?"

"Yes." Her hand clenched in a sudden gesture. "No, I didn't. I told him to wait."

I had never seen Lauretta cry—never had suspected that she could. But now her half averted face was drawn in lines of misery; she caught her breath in a sudden sob and wiped her eyes with the grimy fragment of cotton waste.

"I'm a darned fool and a d-darned liar and I don't know what you'll think of me," she sobbed.

And I laughed. I laughed uncontrollably, hysterically, without in the least intending anything of the sort. I laughed until the tears came, strangled and choked and struggled in vain to control myself. I tried to stop and couldn't. Larry looked back and shouted an inquiry; I could only wave helplessly at him and go on laughing. Lauretta looked at me in amazement at first, then she

drew away and stiffened in anger as I choked down the final spasms and drew breath again.

"I don't see-" she began sullenly.

"Believe me, I'm not laughing at you," I said as seriously as I could. "At myself, perhaps. I don't know just what I did laugh at. I didn't mean to."

"Did I say anything funny?" she demanded, very digni-

fied.

"No. I congratulate you on DeWitt. He's all right. But this whole affair between us is so utterly absurd. I told you that I stopped at Whitehaven. Do you know why?" I grew sober at the recollection. "I asked some one else to marry me, Laury. I was just about to tell you when you told me about DeWitt."

She looked at me with wide eyes in the dusk, her lips

parted in an unspoken accusation.

"Did I know about DeWitt?" I defended. "We're a bad lot, you and I."

Her expression softened and she broke into a smile. "Aren't we, though?" she exclaimed, and then—and I swear there was a note of jealousy in her voice: "Who was it? Lotta Fairleigh?"

"Good Lord, no! No one that you know, Laury. We were engaged once—when I first came to New York—we broke it off. And seeing her again. . . . You must have been a little girl in short skirts then."

"And so I am to congratulate you, too?"

"No."

She caught her breath and was silent for a space. "That's what has been worrying you, then. I'm sorry.

"Was that why you fell in love with me—because I resembled her?" she said presently, coming to the end of some line of thought. "Since she came first, when I was a so-little girl."

"There's no comparison, Laury; I've avoided making one," I answered. She showed signs of going on with

further questions. "Please don't. I'm nearly mad with thinking of it."

"I wonder," she said after a time. "I wonder if—did she and Ross——"

She fumbled over it, but I caught her meaning.

"No," I answered. "I think that they had nothing to do with the question between us. There is a connection—there couldn't help but be. Still, they're outside of this. They just showed us before it was too late."

"I suppose that's it," she assented soberly. "I hope it is."

The land to the right fell away abruptly and we swung into the shadowy lower reach of the river. Ahead of us and to starboard were the low banked lights of the steamer; her wake gleamed white and ghostlike behind her, a white reflection of the black smoke above. Larry switched on the searchlight on the cowl before and wigwagged frantically; an answering blast came booming back to us.

"Just make it," his voice was whipped back to us.

We drove on. The lights came nearer; we swung over and followed her wake, hissing and spinning overside. She whistled for the landing; the muffled clangor of bells came to us; a white welter of foam grew out from beneath her churning paddles in widespread wings. We drove through the waves raised by her passage, pitched wildly for a moment as the bow thumped and sent out hissing showers of spray, and then circled ahead. The lights of the steamer blended with those of the wharf; we heard the thump of ropes, the rattle of the gangplank; a warning shout sounded from the high darkness of her pilot house. The insistent clamor of our motor decreased in volume; the bow settled slowly and we stole within the circle of radiance. Faces peered down on us from the tiered decks as we slid alongside; Larry clutched

at the projecting deck and we stopped. I swung my bag over the rail and leaped up after it.

Below me the launch lay in the dark shadow of the overhang; their two faces, dimly illuminated, stood out disembodied. The gangplank rattled inboard, a prelim-

inary swirl of the paddles and Larry shoved out.

"Let us know when to expect you," he called as the paddles churned mightily and set the Warp rocking. Lauretta reached for the throttle and the Warp sent an answering swirl of froth against the spume from the paddles. We moved slowly apart. Lauretta stood in the stern, looking up and back at me as the long shape neared the outer edge of light She stood immobile for a moment, a shadowy white figure against the darkness, her face a dim blur. Then her arm shot up in a gesture of farewell. I gestured blindly in reply; a staccato roar of explosions and the stern light of the Warp swung off in a wide circle, faded, twinkled, reappeared, and vanished.

## CHAPTER THE FIFTH

I

I BEACHED New York at noon. There creeps into my mind the memory of a discussion which went on behind me all the way down from Boston; a discussion which started amicably enough on the subject of straw braid and leather findings between Boston and Providence, shifted ground to the Masurian Lakes and Belgium between Providence and New London and finally died away into frigid silence broken by snorts of contempt after we had passed New Haven. I remember a wilderness of discarded newspapers along the aisle of the subway train, the crowds before the bulletin boards in Park Row, the inevitable orator at the foot of the statue as I crossed to Stowell's office.

I found quiet instead of the confusion which I had dimly expected. Stowell was out, I was languidly informed by the girl in the outer office. "Any message?" I gave her my name and she looked at me with sudden interest.

"He is at your office," she said, and reached for the telephone. "Shall I call him?"

"Don't bother; I'm going right over."

I went down again through the streets, crowded now with the noon hour throng, looking at the passing faces in sudden distaste. Once, long ago, I had been glad to get back to this; now I found it all ugly, singularly futile and meaningless.

The ecclesiastical walls and vaults of the outer office still echoed faintly with the buzz and hum of voices and ruffled papers and muffled typewriters; I noticed, however, that the buzz died away as I approached and sprang up again as I passed. Heads were turned, and faces stared at me. I was conscious of a feeling of annoyance; I was a stranger, I knew, but there seemed no need of making my appearance an occasion of wonder. I nodded to Noyes, the Group C manager, as I passed his desk; he rose and caught up with me, gesticulating with crumpled papers. I caught the tag end of a question.

"See Marks," I said impatiently, and waved him off.

He gaped in a queer fashion and fell behind.

Stowell looked up as I entered and shut out the subdued murmur behind me. He was seated at Marks' desk, papers piled methodically about him.

"Well," he said, and rose to greet me. He had the hushed and tiptoeing air of a mourner at a funeral.

"Where were you?"

"Down in Maine. I came as quickly as I could. . . . But you must have known; I got your telegram."

"I sent seven," he answered, "and took a chance on one of them finding you." He paused, and looked at me in silence.

"Well, what's the trouble?" I asked.

He remained silent, fingering the piles of paper before him in evident embarrassment. His attitude nettled me; I had come prepared to battle with unguessed terrors on his behalf. Now he seemed afraid to tell me.

"Come out of it," I said abruptly. "You called me on account of some trouble, I know. Who's the victim?"

"You are," he admitted.

"Then why didn't you say so? I've been imagining all sorts of things about you, from divorce to embezzlement. What's the trouble? Fire? Strike? More Pingree?"

"You've lost The Stores," he said abruptly. "Of course I can't say for sure," he went on hurriedly, "that's just a rough guess and it may not be so bad as that. There are many things that I don't dare to touch," and he gestured toward the piled papers, "and a great many things missing. I'm telling you the worst, you see."

"I can stand it," I said after a momentary pause. "I'm getting used to losing things. But where do you come in on this?"

"I've been here since—what's to-day? Thursday?—since Tuesday morning. Marks called me Monday night—late. I didn't recognize his voice at first; what he said was nothing more than a jumble, anyway. All I got out of it was that he wanted to see me in the morning—that and the information that everything had gone to hell. I agreed; I thought he was talking about the war. But I came down Tuesday; waited around; no Marks. Coupled with what he'd said the night before I began to suspect that something was wrong. I did a little snooping around—there were papers all over the office for any fool to see, you know—and I got just a flash of the whole trouble. Then—that tall man in the second group section——"

"Fisher?" I volunteered.

"Fisher came in here looking for orders and I acted on a hunch and told him what to do. I said that I'd been sent for by Marks—which was nothing more than the truth—and told him not to bother me. It took me all Tuesday to get on your trail, and the rest of the time I've been trying to piece things together. . . . I stayed all last night."

"You look it. . . . But what has Marks done?" I asked. "Why the devil isn't he here?"

"He won't be in," Stowell answered slowly, and nodded in answer to my unspoken question. "They found him this morning—up state in that big car of his. . . . Either driving blindly to get away from himself or going with some idea of getting into Canada. I don't know. There's nothing illegal, as far as I can find out. Trying to get away from himself, I imagine. . . . The car was a mess, all smashed. . . . And the wheel caught him under the chin." He made a gesture of repugnance, and stopped.

"A rotten mess, isn't it?" he said finally.

"It must be," I agreed. "I can't imagine—" But there were so many things that I couldn't imagine.

In the silence that followed, some one tried the door. Stowell barked an impatient order and the interruption ceased. He went on.

"Greenwood and Lyons were in here yesterday. They're in on it—they never forgave Marks, you know. I persuaded them to postpone action until we found either you or Marks. . . . You're both found and we might as well go ahead." He reached for the telephone and then paused. "I'm not sure, but as nearly as I can determine, Marks has hocked the whole business with them and thrown it all into stocks. Why? Why does any one try that game? . . . And when the Exchange closed. . . . He had some object, I suppose. That game always attracted him; you remember how he used to pore over the financial news even in the days of the old office? He must have started last fall, when you left, and kept getting in deeper and deeper. I've found some notes which give me a hint of that."

He dropped his mournful manner and assumed one of forced and wearied cheerfulness. "We'll plug through somehow," he said. "It's probably not so bad as I've painted it."

"I don't care how bad it is," I answered.

He looked at me in doubt.

"I don't care," I repeated, and spoke the truth. This question of coming back to work had troubled me during the past week; now it seemed settled. To come back and face years of purposeless building had been unthinkable. . . . Stowell's blank face looked at me reproachfully over the mouthpiece of the phone; I remembered that he knew nothing of the happenings of the past two weeks.

"No; I'm not out of my head," I said. "That's all right. What's the first move?"

"Call in Greenwood and Lyons," he said after a mo-

ment. "I've no status here, you know, save what is

founded on pure bluff. But—you don't care?"

"There are worse things than this, Dick. Call them in and we'll get started. You'll stay and see it through with me?"

"Surely."

He fixed his eyes on me and slowly wagged his head from side to side. With that expression of wonder still on his face, he lifted the receiver.

"Well-let's dig into it," he said shortly.

11

It was past midnight when we let ourselves out into the deserted streets. We went along wearily; all that afternoon and far into the night we had wrangled with Greenwood. Dick showed the effect of the strain; I know that I felt it. We had both been without sleep for two days. A faint suggestion of coolness came on the breeze from the river; from far down Broadway came the echoing clatter of a street sweeper, a motor driven ant, garnering by night. We turned off into a side street. Stowell stopped.

"Let's eat," he said, and we descended the steps of an all night restaurant, one of these places that lurk below the street level and send out rays of light across the sidewalk to ensnare the stray and infrequent passerby. Stowell ordered from a menu in purple ink; I awakened to a dim recognition of the place. I had never entered it before, but the type had once been familiar—a pressed metal ceiling of glaring whiteness, electric fan playing on the pastry, mirrors shrouded in whorls and scallops of whiting, and chairs constructed with total disregard of the human frame. Stowell and I had often eaten postponed suppers in such places years ago, coming home from midnight sessions of planning. Nothing seemed changed, not even the waiter's apron.

Despite his boasted hunger Stowell ate but little, watching me as he stirred a huge cup of coffee and drew thoughtfully at a cigar.

"Miserable business," he commented finally.

I came slowly out of my foggy recognition of the place. "Keeping a joint like this, you mean?" I hazarded.

He waved my answer aside impatiently. "This whole

matter at the office."

"Yes; miserable indeed," I agreed. "And it will get worse as we get further into it. To-day we just scraped the surface."

He made dingy circles on the marble top of the table with the bottom of his cup. "We'll find out what is below as we go on," he said absently. "But there are two questions——"

He made a chain of circles before he went on. "Two questions," he resumed. "First, why Marks let all this come about. It looks like deliberate wreckage, although that's out of the question. Greenwood knows the answer to that and says that he doesn't. . . . We'll have to piece that out as we go along."

"And the second question?"

"You say that this doesn't matter," he stated abruptly.
"It doesn't," I answered; "I'm not sorry. About Marks—that's another matter; I'm sorry for that. But for my part of it—I don't care."

"Why not?"

"I don't, that's all."

"I see only one reason," he concluded. "You knew what Marks was doing and stood ready to accept the result. Am I right?"

"No. I have been in the office twice in the past year; whatever Marks has done has been done without my knowledge."

"I thought so," he said. "Then what else has happened?"

I looked at him, startled. "You know?"

"I guessed," he said, shaking his head. "Go on; start somewhere."

"It began at Whitehaven," I said after a moment.

"When were you there?" he interrupted.

"Two weeks ago."

He nodded to himself. "I had a mental bet on that," he explained. "One of my telegrams went there."

"I'll go back beyond that," I decided. "You remember the Annersleys? You met them last summer, I think." "I remember," he said. "There was a daughter, wasn't there?"

I started there and told him the entire affair, from the building of the Shack down to the catching of the Boston boat the night before. It was a relief to tell some one these things; more of a relief than I had ever imagined confession could be. Over some parts of it I gagged and hesitated; I still had some small fragments of pride remaining and it was hard to show myself as doing the wrong thing. I got through it, somehow, and felt the better for it. During the whole of my recital Dick smoked thoughtfully, without interrupting me, mobilizing and demobilizing the salt cellars and mustard pots on the table before him. Infrequent customers came and went; the waiter shuffled and scuffed about, eying us curiously.

"You see, don't you?" I concluded. "I could have come back to work here—but why should I? It would be work without an object, it would take up my time, keep me going—and that's all. Perhaps I might have developed a new interest in The Stores, something after Marks' interest, building for the sake of building, playing the game for the game's sake. I don't know. That always seemed a useless thing to me. That's what I tried to get away from. . . . But I should have come to that, even knowing that I had no desire to do it. That way is closed to me now and I'm glad of it; I'd have drifted into it surely—just because it was easiest."

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Stowell crushed out the fire of his cigar on the tray

and padded out the glowing sparks.

"You take these matters too seriously—women—love—and all that," he said slowly. "You've gone without them so long. And now you discover them and they fill your whole horizon."

He paused, embarrassed.

"I suppose I do exaggerate their importance, Dick. And yet—it isn't these things alone. They're on the surface; and yet not entirely on the surface. They have passed, and—you've seen a ship pass through a shallow channel and leave it boiling with muck and oily scum behind? It's so with me. . . . No; I'm a spoiled child, but I'm not throwing away my rattle because I can't have the moon. Get that idea out of your head. I've been thinking about myself lately, seeing myself in a new light. My channel of life has been stirred to the bottom. It's not pretty. I've been going wrong all my life, and this gives me a chance to get out of it before I go wrong further. I can start over again—after some fashion." "You've lost your grip," he accused.

I considered that. "No; I think not. I never had any grip to lose. I'm not discouraged, disheartened, not disappointed, not dis anything but disgusted with myself. And that only faintly; disgust implies hope and I'm too far gone for that. I'm not afraid; anything but that... I've drifted long enough; I'm on a lee shore and I'm not trying to claw off. I'm going ashore alone; that's one satisfaction. I've hurt no one save myself—and Bess. And I don't know whether she's hurt or not—now. I think that she is beyond being hurt by any action of mine. She seems to have arrived at a state where such things don't matter. Not that she has lost the capacity for feeling, but she has got down to some solid basis of fact that I can't touch or even imagine. These things seem to pass over her. Think what her life is—what it

has been! And it's all my fault. She's made a rotten

marriage, given up everything she once hoped for-been a failure in every way. And yet she has made a success of it. Out of all the ruin that other people have made of her life—first her father, then her mother, then myself and lastly Learoyd-we've all had a hand in it-out of all this she has built up something and is happy. I've always gone along as I pleased, consulted nothing but my own caprice—and I'm not happy. I've gone from one self-made illusion to the next, and got nothing out of it. She has gone from one disillusionment to another and is content. I've ridden the crest of the wave; now it has fallen and I'm jetsam-just jetsam. It all comes home to me at once: I've done nothing more in life than make myself unhappy and make her unhappy too. . . . I want to make it up to her-and I know that I can do that no more than I can change the course of the stars by blowing bubbles at them. I don't regret my own failure—I can stand that-but the realization that I've made a failure of her life too ... It hurts, I tell you, it hurts,"

"I know, I know," said Stowell as I paused. "We all feel that way sometimes. Everything seems wrong."

"You don't know," I answered. "You can't. Your wrongs are all little ones, not the product of a lifetime."
"Are you sure that you are right now?" he asked.

"No; I'm not. Perhaps I'm going to the other extreme. I'm sure of nothing, absolutely nothing save that I was wrong before. Look here——"

He held up a warning hand. "Not so loud," he said. The waiter passed us with a curious glance; I became aware that a beefy necked man in a celluloid collar was listening visibly from a neighboring table.

"I don't care whether they hear or not," I said. "They probably think I'm drunk." But Stowell's interruption had broken my thread of thought and we sat silent for a time, to the evident displeasure of the fat necked person.

"There's The Stores," Stowell resumed. "You've been a success in that."

"I wonder," I answered slowly. "Is money making your idea of success?"

He stumbled and groped for a reply; I cut in midway on his answer. "I don't mean to criticize your standards. I should have asked that question in a different way; is that the right idea of success? And have I been successful even in that? Have I created better things—even there? I have imagined things, not created them. You and Marks and the rest did the creating. Any fool can tell how things should be; making them so is another matter. The Stores is the work of the men who did the building, not the one fool who did the imaginative part of the work."

"How much would any of us accomplish unaided?" he asked.

"Not much," I concluded. "But that is beside the main question. Granted that the creation of The Stores was mine. Is that on the credit or debit side of the ledger? . . . Damn The Stores! . . . Bess and I had our first break over that; I thought more of The Stores than I did of her. I had my choice, and I made it. A good choice; I've hated The Stores since the day I made my choice between that and Bess. . . . Has The Stores brown hair and blue eyes and a dear, twisted, one-sided smile? Does the thought of The Stores bring tears to my eyes? Can this creation of mine talk to me? be my wife? bear my children? . . . Christ!"

Through a misty blur I saw Stowell look at me curiously. "I wish that I knew the other side of this," he said slowly. "If I knew what Bess really thought——"

"I've told you," I said wearily. "And would it matter if you did know?"

"Perhaps not. But I'd like to know. . . . Let's go home and get some sleep."

ш

Gradually, as we worked along, we untangled the confusion that Marks had left behind him, finding loose ends and running them down to their origin, slowly producing some semblance of order out of chaos. He had allowed the business to fall into a state of incredible disorder during these last few months; the fact that The Stores had held together at all was a tribute to the strength with which he had built. Subsidiary companies had fallen away and developed to cross purposes; contracts had been neglected; everything had been postponed to the last possible moment and then apparently forgotten. There had been a relaxation, a slackening of the central purpose which had held the network together; even had Marks survived the first crash of the war the problem would still have been much the same. Our work was threefold; we gathered in the tangled reins, sought an appraisal of the damage—and prepared to abandon the structure to Greenwood and Lyons.

I can't blame Marks for this confusion. I can imagine what depths of hell he must have gone through as the final day drew nearer and nearer; by some freak of chance the greater part of his obligations had fallen due on the first day of August. And then the news of war, the closing of the market, the vanishing of the final hope—— He suffered in full. There would have been sufficient excuse for neglect in the period of depression which preceded the war; with the added burden of slowly approaching disaster he must have lived for nearly a year in a state of inconceivable mental torment. At another time I might have felt bitterly toward him for this blind misuse of what we held in common, this wanton destruction of our structure; as it was, I felt only sympathetic regret. He, too, had bungled.

Greenwood and Lyons failed to help us. At first they were very voluble with explanations, with surmises, with

vaguely condolent reflections on Marks' sanity. They knew nothing; how should they? Stowell had suspected that they were in some way responsible, and as a suspicion we let it rest. What promises they held forth to Marks I do not know. There may have been no promises; perhaps, like myself, they merely were instrumental in affording Marks his opportunity.

But their assistance, if they did assist, was merely a minor cause of Marks' wild career of speculation. During the first week we found the real cause; even before that we had found hints in scribbled memoranda, brief notes in Marks' desk—all segments of the circumference and all bearing on a common center. We guessed at the center, and finally Stowell found it.

"Look here," he said, as I returned from a trip to the warehouse. He shoved aside a pile of papers at his elbow and spread out a dilapidated blank book. As he flipped over the covers I looked over his shoulder and recognized it as the old notebook which I had kept at Hatherly's, the book which had contained the germ of The Stores.

"That?" I said. "I haven't seen it for years. Where was it?"

"In the wall safe—at the bottom, under a pile of stuff. Marks hid it there, I think."

"Why should he hide it?"

"You'll see. Look it over-start here."

The book, as he handed it to me, stood open at a great numeral "II"; I frowned over that and endeavored to recall setting it down. I ran back over the familiar sheets; the numeral "I" was prefaced to those in my own handwriting. I turned to the second section again; it was in Marks' neat, angular hand, each double page a complete summary of some detail of the second web.

"Evidently kept as we went along," I commented, "although I fail to recognize some of these details."

Stowell nodded. "Go on," he said.

Another great numeral; the third section. I found this entirely incomprehensible; across the head of each sheet was the name of a city—Philadelphia, Cleveland, Chicago, Pittsburg—almost twenty in all, and below each name were orderly columns of figures filling the page.

"What's all this?" I asked irritably. "A crypto-

gram?"

"The figures, you mean? Filing sections."

"But we use the alphabetical system—always have. Has he changed that?"

"That puzzled me at first, until I recognized it as the same system we use at the office. You remember telling me that you had outgrown the old filing room and were using it for dead material?"

"That was two years ago," I remembered.

"That's where this new index system comes in. Marks threw out the dead stuff and used the space for himself."

"But why Cleveland and Albany and these other places? What have they to do with us?"

"Nothing—now." He turned over the pile of papers which he had shoved to one side. "But they might have meant something. I went down to the old filing room while you were out and took a survey. This," and he lifted the pile, "is about one tenth of the stuff on Cleveland alone. . . . Marks planned to duplicate The Stores in each of those cities, you see. . . . I know, it sounds wild, doesn't it? But it was all planned—and I almost believe that he would have gone through with it."

We looked at each other.

"The thing is impossible," I said. "That would run into millions, Dick."

"Impossible? I'm not sure. . . . But that explains his speculation. I imagine that he intended to come to you with plans fully developed, convince you—oh, I know that he could have—and then ride down your final objection of expense."

"Perhaps," I admitted, "but—it's imagination running wild, Dick."

"Perhaps. But go on."

I turned again to the book. Beyond the third section was another. This fourth section is difficult to define; as it stood in the book it was no more than a shadowy incompleteness, an inchoate expression of an idea which had never emerged from the shadows and taken on definite form. It reached out beyond the third section; how far it reached is doubtful. There were fragmentary notes, disconnected words and phrases, hieroglyphic snatches of diagrams, all mingled and jumbled together. Some pages were black with penciled notes; others contained single phrases standing forth alone. What it all meant is still in doubt; I believe that the end which Marks contemplated was the acquisition of the entire selling end of business in the United States. And I'm not sure of that, so disjointed and inconclusive was this fourth section. Perhaps that is nothing more than my interpretation of it. This book had been his confessional, his confidant; how much of what he set down was merely a mental conception; impossible of completion, I have no means of knowing. There were notes which leaped out ahead, unconnected with anything else, vague flashes of ideas and possibilities caught in passing. Only Marks could have explained it all. It was wonderful, and at the same time infinitely pathetic. Pasted to one page, and with a great question mark against it, was a life insurance calculation. Some inconclusive doubt must have been present in Marks' mind; what he had mapped out was enough to occupy three lives.

As I pieced together these indistinct odds and ends and got some idea of his fantastic yet plausible plan, this vast Orion's belt of stars spread across the country with interlacing tips against the dim background of this greater plan, I forgot all Marks' petty mannerisms, once so annoying. I had disliked him during these last years

for his planless grasping; now I saw the reason for it. "I wish that I had understood him better," I said soberly, as I laid the book aside. . . .

This was late in August. The clearing up of the wreckage of The Stores took three months in all, but, beyond certain minor incidents, my memories of this time

are essentially confusion.

I realized that I had lost more than The Stores. My old life was ended. The Arrowrock, the Shadow, all the old, careless existence of these past few years, now became impossible. I was shut off from the past by an impassable barrier; the future appeared ahead as a gray wall beyond which nothing was visible.

That, I think, was the real cause of my breakdown. I had always lived half in the present, half in the future. Now my present was a hell of torturing memories, my future an intangible non-existence. Even when work had been most distasteful to me it had been a future possibility, to turn to when I should tire of the present. Now I was denied even that comfort.

One by one my holds on the present loosened. Kavenaugh brought the Shadow down from Bath. She lay at Evans' yards until Chris Blake made me an offer for her. I took it. I needed the money, and it was evident that my future income would leave no margin for her upkeep. I made a furtive trip down to the Arrowrock and arranged to have the windows of the Shack boarded up. I borrowed money from Stowell to pay the carpenter. . . .

During all this time the memory of Elizabeth was always with me. However far I circled away, I always came back to that. . . .

But most bitter of all was the realization that Marks' failure was my fault. I knew that had I stayed at work as I should have, had I taken even a passing interest in his plans, the crash need never have occurred. . . . Once or twice, engrossed in disentangling some rebellious snarl,

I forgot that he was beyond human call, turned to consult him—and remembered.

As I have said, only a few of the events of those last three months remain in my memory. Stowell says that at times I talked and muttered to myself, conducting fragmentary arguments with invisible opponents. Perhaps I did; I have no remembrance of it. I know that during the last month I was unable to sleep. A little purple devil rode mahout on each eyeball, prodding incessantly. I do remember long walks during sleepless nights, walking briskly and jerkily about the city, seeking forgetfulness. Once I must have wandered as far up town as the warehouse; I seem to remember surveying it for a long time from across the street, a silent gray block, unlit save for the creeping glow worm of the watchman on his rounds, a flickering light beyond the shifting gray phantasy of mingled snow and sleet. This must have been during the last days of the settlement period, the days when people turned to look at me on the streets.

I remember also that the future preyed on me with positive terror as it drew nearer. What would comeafter the untangling of the present problem? This after-life loomed ahead, inescapable, a blank gray wall,

approaching daily, inexorably.

Through it all I had the feeling of a man preparing for inevitable death, oppressed by the knowledge that the world would go on much the same after his passage, face to face with the unsolvable problem of the beyond—and

horribly afraid.

IV

Stowell irritated me at times. He watched me. He was sympathetically bright and cheerful. He tried to help me by suggesting futures. And the net result of his efforts was to aggravate my mental confusion. talked interminably of his own work, trying to interest me; once, at least, he asked me point blank to come in with him. His work was good, I knew; it offered a future. But I had settled that definitely; unable to order my own life, I was unfit to meddle with the lives of others.

"But what are you going to do?" he asked me more than once. And then: "Oh, the devil! That's no

answer."

There was no answer.

I must have puzzled him. I overheard the tail end of a discussion between him and Fisher, a discussion which evidently referred to me.

"There ought to be some way of getting him awake,"

Stowell concluded.

"I've heard," said Fisher judicially, "that in such cases a sudden shock of some sort does the trick. And since you say that he's worried chiefly over something outside The Stores—"

I imagined him as frowning helpfully.

"Um," came Stowell's voice. And after a pause: "Perhaps."

They were ostentatiously engaged in other matters when I entered.

After that Stowell ceased to trouble me with inquiries and suggestions. He continued to watch me, continued to treat me as a sick child, to be humored and spoken to softly, but the irritation of his interference was past.

I depended on him more and more. Once he was absent for three days without explanation; lacking his controlling hand I fought with Greenwood, fought with Lyons, made an irritable beast of myself about the offices and was nearly insane when he returned.

He came back to find me glaring at Greenwood across the broad table in the inner office. Greenwood returned my glare with interest and we were both speechless with contempt. His senseless quibbling over petty details had brought me to the end of my patience. Stowell's entrance snapped the tension.

"You're back, eh?" snapped Greenwood. "Glad of it; we can talk sense now." He slammed off, with a backward glance of contempt in my direction.

"How goes it?" asked Dick cheerfully.

"As you see. Greenwood has been egging me on to commit murder. Where have you been?"

"Away. Just away. I'll tell you about it sometime.
... What were you two wild men scrapping about?"

He would give no further explanation. . . .

The last day came. My last connection with The Stores was severed, the last line cast off. Greenwood made the last possible concession, grudgingly, to be sure, but still he made it. No doubt he considered me a desperate man.

"Well," he said despairingly, "as you say. It's more than we should let you have, but——" He signed with the air of a man doing an act of charity. Then he smiled engulfingly and extended a huge moist hand. Apparently he was ready to consider our past antagonism as a business ruse. "Fortunes of war," he grinned.

I overlooked his hand. "May I clear out my desk, or

do you want that too?"

He glared at me a moment, his fingers twitching. "We want no reminders of you," he said; then stamped off

to exercise his new authority.

So Stowell sat and watched me as I rummaged through the desk, two great waste baskets on either side of me. Through the half open door came the old subdued murmur and rustle; a clerk passed with two heaping baskets of papers on the way to the filing room; his contented whistle made a little eddy of sound in the silence. Everything went on as usual. Stowell glanced nervously at his watch.

"Don't stay; the show is over."

"Are you in a hurry to get rid of me?" he asked, and pulled out his watch again.

"No. But put up that cursed watch, will you?" I

asked. "Time flies, I know, without your reminders."

I went on, finished and disposed of one drawer and started on the next, sweeping great masses of papers into the baskets and tossing aside the few things that I wished to retain.

"What now?" asked Stowell.

"I've told you—nothing."

"Oh nonsense!" he said, and made an impatient gesture. I was too tired to flare up in reply. The gray wall of the future was very near; my hold on the present had dwindled to a bare ledge, slippery under my feet.

He watched me for a moment in silence; then went on

in a new line. He bullied me.

"You'll do what I say," he threatened. "Go back to Whitehaven and patch yourself up. You've got the old house left and a half interest in the store—beside what you've saved from this. Then come back and I'll set you to work. You hear that?"

I gave no sign.

"Go back and make it up with Elizabeth," he went on, without mercy. "Drop this King Cophetua attitude. You were a fool and you know it. You've broken with her twice—once because of the future and once because of the past. Try living in the present for a while. You've never tried that; you refuse to try it. You're up against a dead wall—no future. Run up another wall and shut out the past."

He paused for effect. Why couldn't he let me alone for this last hour?

"Try it, will you?" he pleaded.

I went on, blindly sorting over a white blur of papers, choosing and discarding without seeing.

"If you could see her again-"

"Don't. I never shall."

"You won't go back, then?"

I shook my head. The effort set the room swaying

#### FLOOD TIDE

and reeling about me; I recovered my balance with difficulty. The pain over my eyes had grown more intense during these last days; the purple devils were full size now and had grown expert with practice. Also they had developed voices, and shouted comments to each other, commenting on the progress of the ever nearing gray wall.

A shadowy form veiled the half open door for a moment, peered in curiously, and was gone. Stowell rose and stood over me.

"I hoped—no matter," he said. "Good-by." "Good-by."

The door clicked softly behind him. Even Dick had deserted me. This was the end.

I emptied the last drawer. In it were a few scattered papers, and, at the bottom, the dog-cared old notebook whose contents had been the cause of my failure and success. I swept the papers to the floor; they were worthless now. But the book . . . I stared at it for a moment, then spread it apart and tore it to pieces. The door behind me creaked softly as I ripped up page after page, tearing my dreams and Marks' dreams to tattered fragments. The last page fluttered down.

I wheeled about in my chair, irrevocably shut off from all the past. The door opened slowly; through it, as I stared, came Elizabeth. Uncertain, flushed, with a faint shadow of that old one-sided smile, she came toward me. Behind her Stowell's anxious face appeared.

I rose unsteadily. Through the door, obscuring Stowell's face, came what I had dreaded—the gray wall of mist which I had imagined as the future beyond the end of The Stores. It came on, a blank reality, as I watched in terror. It passed Elizabeth; she became an indistinct figure, reaching appealing arms toward me through the dim whiteness. It advanced swiftly, noiselessly, horribly, like the gray walls of evening fog which

Dick and I had watched from the cliffs long ago. It flowed around me and the world vanished. In the gray dusk strange antediluvian beasts moaned and yammered—endlessly.

V

Biologists have a lordly way of dismissing great stretches of time with a careless wave of the hand. "Three million years, perhaps four, and we have—" perhaps a new kink in the tail of an arthropod. The earth whirled some millions of times on its axis; the moon cooled, contracted, and ceased to fill so large a part of the heavens; somewhere in one distant corner of the sky two stars collided, struggled a while, spawned a brood of planets and settled down to respectable married life. Meanwhile the arthropod, squirming contentedly in the steaming mud, perhaps developed an extra pair of ribs or turned his eyes outward. One envies him his careless expenditure of time.

So with this gray fog period. Time passed, and nothing happened. Eons passed; eons marked one from the other by the slow alternation of dim light and faint shadow within the fog. There was no time in this gray future, merely this imperceptibly slow tarnishing and brightening of the silver gray dimness. Yet time passed, somewhere beyond the gray boundaries, as a river flows unseen below its covering of ice. This flow was perceptible but immeasurable; I had no knowledge whether these indistinct boundaries marked the passage of days or occuturies.

Still there was a minor division of this period. When I entered the mist it undulated, swirled, bearing me helpless in a weird saraband. There was a distant yammering and crying in the dim twilight, a subdued ululant lamentation which ultimately faded and became lost in silence.

With the passage of this inarticulate mouthing there

was a cessation of all movement, a dead calm in which I moved disembodied. The mist flattened, ceased swirling, became thick, viscid, thicker than any earthly fog. It possessed a quality of resistance; movement required an immense effort, an immense mental effort. After a century or so I became convinced of the futility of effort. In some curious way I was content.

I was content because I was not alone in the fog. There seemed another near me; intangible, unseen, unheard, perceptible only through intuition. This presence comforted me. It was my one grip on reality. I clung to

it; to lose that was to lose everything.

During the first part of the fog, before it ceased flowing and undulating, I was obsessed by something which needed explanation on my part; something which seemed explicable and yet beyond explanation. At length I seemed to make myself understood. My explanation was vague, speechless, incoherent; an explanation of something which I myself understood none too clearly. I seemed to reiterate, to grope vainly for modes of expression. Always I arrived at the same end, an end which always satisfied this unseen presence beyond reach in the fog. . . . Presently I would become restless and take up the thread of explanation again.

Finally this too ceased. My explanation ended. At the same time, I think, came the cessation of the restless movement of the fog. I waited, confident that somewhere

beyond the present grayness was dawn. . . .

But this reconstruction is, at least, largely problematical. I know that there was a fog. No doubt at the time I moved in a limited area of clearness, seeing immediate objects vividly, perhaps seeing the past and future clearly. All that has been sponged away from my memory, wiped clean save for these faint and shadowy lines.

And at last, as abruptly as it had appeared, the fog vanished.

۷I

I looked out through a window, a low, broad-ledged window. Yellow hangings swayed slowly on either side. In the air was an indefinable scent of spring, of awakened earth. Through the upper panes, as the curtains swayed, I saw a low-swung branch with broad leaves and opening spires of white and red blossoms. Beyond were huddled roofs, further still, a glimpse of brown rocks and blue water. A white sail passed.

All this puzzled me beyond measure, for my last memory was—was—there confusion seized me. I remembered an intolerably aching head. But before that——Some one had carried me indoors, with long shining braids over a tartan shawl—or had there been a gray sky, occasional drifting flakes of sooty snow, and a gray fog swirling through an opened door? I decided in favor of the shawl and shining braids. There had been a fog, I remembered, and many bad dreams.

I waited. Presently, I felt, I would see a tall, black-bearded figure pass beyond the hedge. He would click the latch of the gate; then, perceiving me, his brows would relax; he would smile with a flash of teeth and wave to me.

Then these confused impressions vanished in face of a momentous discovery. I discovered my legs, stretched before me on a low stool, wonderfully long and decorated at the further end with stained canvas shoes. Assuredly these were not mine. I contemplated them dubiously for a long time, then ventured on a trial. I moved my toes, and one foot nodded at me in confirmation. That was a trick, I knew. Some one had pulled a string. I tried again; the same result. I became crafty and moved my toes twice in succession. The absurdly distant foot nodded twice. Conviction overcame me.

"That," I said firmly, "is my foot."

Copernicus, first enunciating his belief that the earth

revolved about the sun, might have spoken in the same tone.

"But good Lord, how I have grown!" I added.

For a time I wandered in this border land, half convinced that I was no longer a little boy, half dubious as to the reality of the bad dreams. Then, very much puzzled and suddenly wearied of it all, I fell asleep.

I awoke again, later in the same day; the shadows had wheeled about in the garden and the distant sea was darker in tone. A stray shaft of golden sunlight penetrated the room, illuminating something which had escaped my notice on that first awakening. I seemed to face another window, a casement opening on a distant, misty seascape. A great gray sea lifted a gleaming shoulder in the foreground; a wheeling gull rose from the valley of shadow beyond; further, shining waves receded in misty recessional; a thicker duskiness half hid and half revealed sails shimmering faintly in the silver twilight. And, still beyond, a distant, elusive glimpse of a goal which shifted and throbbed and changed in the changing light even as I watched.

For a bare moment I faced this window on a facric sea, then saw the litter of brushes and tubes and the easel behind. The seascape shifted plane abruptly and became a painting. A good painting, I decided, superlatively good; in handling of warm color and translucent mist faintly reminiscent of some of my own. But much better. And not mine; I saw it for the first time.

I turned to the other window and awoke to full recognition of the present. The tree beyond the window was the horse chestnut tree of my boyhood, the tree from which Jason had carved the figurehead of the Argo, a tree articulate with the low zooning of bees humming from blossom-spire to blossom-spire. This was home, I recognized. How I had reached here failed to puzzle me; the bewildered groping of my first awakening had been supplanted by a deep content.

But one sensation of that first awakening remained. I waited, not for my father, but for some one else. A restless expectancy stirred me. The shadows unfolded imperceptibly as I watched; a ragged procession of white sails drew slowly in past the distant brown rocks; the sea beyond grew ever darker, the soft line of the horizon ever fainter. The bees departed and the talking tree was hushed. . . .

And at last beyond the hedge appeared the one I had awaited—Elizabeth. Memory became complete. She passed hurriedly along, her face turned toward the house. The gate clicked; she approached swiftly along the narrow path. I watched from behind my ambush of yellow curtains. She saw me and her pace slackened; she loitered, as though suddenly relieved from tension. The lilac clumps along the path engrossed her attention; she broke off a cluster here and there, then came on. Outside the window she paused, leaning on the sill, her face level with mine.

"You've finished it?" she asked, her eyes on the canvas behind me.

I had expected—I don't know what; perhaps that she would be surprised to see me. But now I turned in bewilderment to the canvas.

"Is it mine?" I asked after a moment.

"Of course." A faint shadow brushed her face. "Whose should it be?"

"I don't know. But mine—— I don't remember it.

I just woke up, Bess."

"Woke up!" The shadow vanished, supplanted by a swift radiance. She looked at me, one brow lifted in perplexity, her eyes troubled. "Then you don't remember it?"

"Not a single brush mark."

"I believe you are awake." She smiled, yet with a hint of tears in her eyes.

"Have I been asleep long?" I hesitated. "I seem to

remember—I don't know what. I cleaned up my desk—Dick was there—then you came—and now I'm here."

"You've been—not asleep, but away, for half a year," she explained. "Not bodily, but mentally. And not that, exactly. You didn't remember things. You didn't recall anything about The Stores—do you now?"

"Yes. It was a grand smash up, wasn't it? Nobody's fault but mine. And I'm not sorry, except for Marks."

"One part of your mind was taken away like—like an ill-used toy," she went on after a moment. "The rest was clear enough. You remembered everything connected with me, but nothing else. Not even Dick."

"Then I was partly sane? I talked?"

"A great deal," she admitted with a shade of reluctance.

Faint memories dawned on me. "I explained something?"

She nodded slowly.

"What?"

But she was silent, her face turned from me, a clear silhouette against the gathering dusk. My question went unanswered; is unanswered to this day. What I explained, or how, during that period of gray blankness, is still a mystery to me. There was much to explain; much more to atone for. . . . But, for all my lack of memory, I must have been singularly clear minded during the time of fog. Without speech, I was forgiven. I touched her hand timidly, in awkward caress; she turned and smiled mistily at me.

"And you don't remember even your painting? You've done a deal of that lately. Some of it you've sold. This last one—" She looked past me at the misty canvas with the dim silvery sea, the half seen sails, and the elusive goal in the distance. "Your others have been bits about the harbor and along the coast, nothing like this. It's bigger, and entirely different. But you've never seen anything like it."

"No—and yes. Perhaps I haven't seen it, but I've lived it." Even as Sorolla's canvas had once revealed a future to me, so this shimmering gray expanse showed me a past, my own past, filled with blind groping through illusion toward a half-sensed goal. That goal I now recognized within arm's length. . . . Then, as always, my thoughts reversed a step and turned forward.

"I could make a living at that, I suppose."

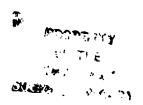
She nodded happily. "But you won't have to, unless you prefer. Dick has been up once or twice. He still

wants you."

"I'd like to try it. His work is out of my line, but still—it's a future. "Swift and absolute dejection overcame me. "That's been my trouble. Always the future. . . . And still the future. Always to-morrow."

She laughed courageously.

"That's the best part of life, after all." Her hand, still in mine, tightened in a firm pressure; beyond the house roofs a sail, pale rose in the sunset glow, passed slowly in, home from the dark sea.



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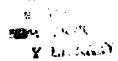
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